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THE HOLY SPIRIT AND AFRICAN DYNAMISM  
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by

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A Dissertation Presented to the  
  
FACULTY OF THE  
  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AT CLAREMONT  
  
In Partial Fulfillment of the  
  
Requirements for the Degree  
  
DOCTOR OF RELIGION

June 1969

*This dissertation, written by*

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*under the direction of his Faculty Committee,  
and approved by its members, has been presented  
to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of  
Theology at Claremont in partial fulfillment of the  
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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM AND THE CHALLENGE

Throughout its history the Christian missionary enterprise has been faced with the constant challenge of sailing between the Scylla of syncretistic accommodation and the Charybdis of dogmatic inflexibility. The most creative and successful effort of Christian missions have been those which have adapted both message and methodology to the given cultural milieu while, at the same time, remaining faithful to the essence of the Gospel which both transcends and transforms culture. This philosophy was practiced in Japan by the famous sixteenth century Jesuit missionary, Francis Xavier.

He saw that, while the Gospel must transform and refine and recreate, it need not necessarily reject as worthless everything that has come before. This new idea was to be fruitful in results--and also in controversies.<sup>1</sup>

This approach, applicable in Japan four hundred years ago, is even more relevant to the missionary witness in contemporary Africa. If Christianity is to become deeply rooted and indigenous in the African cultural matrix, it will have to face the challenge of

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Neill, A History of Christian Missions (Harmondsworth, England: Pelican, 1966), p. 156.

making its message and practices relevant to the African dynamic world-view. Prior to the present thrust of modern missions, Christianity had twice been planted in Africa and twice failed to bear lasting indigenous fruit. Although the contributing factors for this demise are varied and complex, the essential failure in both instances stemmed from the fact that the church continued to be foreign in thought and practice and thereby failed to become a part of the culture.

The thesis of this dissertation is that the Christian mission can best relate to and evaluate African dynamism by understanding and appreciating the often neglected dynamic element in its own heritage, the Holy Spirit. In doing this, it will prepare the soil for the growth of a truly African church. The church has used the term, Holy Spirit, to signify God immanent and acting in the midst of the world as a life-giving power and a personal presence. It is precisely this immanent, life-giving aspect of divine reality which has the most meaning and relevance to the African with his dynamic cosmology and ontology. John Taylor, Anglican missionary-theologian, expresses the distinct importance to African thought of the discovery of God as Holy Spirit:

This discovery that the vague and distant Creator is the center and focus of every moment of all being is so catastrophic that it may overshadow for a time everything else in the Gospel.<sup>2</sup>

The essence of this affirmation has been made by scores of other missionaries attempting to relate the Christian faith to African culture. It is one thing, however, to make such an affirmation; it is quite another to scrutinize and reflect upon the threads of thought woven into that same affirmation. This dissertation will attempt such an analysis, an analysis of how and why the Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit can be related to African dynamism. Such a study will not only involve an evaluation of African dynamism, but will necessarily entail a comprehensive reflection on the nature and work of the Holy Spirit. It is the underlying assumption and conviction of this study that such an analysis can and should be helpful in formulating a missionary strategy relevant to contemporary Africa.

Not only is the Western missionary enterprise faced with the challenge of finding ways in which the concept of the Holy Spirit can be related to African dynamism, it must also face

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<sup>2</sup>John V. Taylor, The Primal Vision (London: SCM Press, 1963), p. 122.

honestly and realistically the fact that throughout the history of the Western Church the concept of the Holy Spirit has played an increasingly limited and diminishing role. This is another way of saying that the Western missionary stands in a tradition that has been plagued with the continual proclivity to depreciate the dynamic and quench the Spirit. Needless to say, such a tradition contributes to making less than an objective judgment concerning the value and desirability of the dynamic and spontaneous expressive behavior so prevalent in African culture. The limited and diminishing significance of the Holy Spirit in the Western Church can be directly related to attitudes concerning the relation of the Spirit to the church, to the Bible, and to cosmology. Since these three areas have vitally affected the Western theological perspective concerning pneumatology, some further amplification is in order.

In spite of the fact that the power and presence of the Holy Spirit played a dominant and pivotal role in the life and witness of the earliest Christian community, the dynamic intensity and spontaneity tended to be tempered by the exigencies of both time and history. Within a cultural milieu plagued by scores of competing religions, the church leaders soon recognized that the more dynamic elements of Christianity needed to be controlled and



adjudicated. This need was met by the formation of the episcopacy, making bishops in various cities overseers of the doctrines and practices of the heretofore independent house churches. The most notable and significant rejection of spontaneous religious expression came with the church's condemnation of Montanism, a second century apocalyptic movement which emphasized ascetic living and the gifts of the Spirit. Montanism was first condemned by one of the first councils of bishops held in Asia Minor. Montanists were expelled from the church and debarred from communion.<sup>3</sup> The important point to note is that Montanism was rejected not only because it threatened the unity of the church during a precarious time, but also because it threatened the authority of the existing ecclesiastical structure.

No government is possible if the nominal sovereign is liable to the checks which Montanist prophecy would, if suffered to remain in the Church, have continually interposed.<sup>4</sup>

This action in relation to Montanism later produced an attitude that

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<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, A History of Christianity (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), p. 132.

<sup>4</sup> John De Soyres, Montanism and the Primitive Church (Lexington, Kentucky: American Theological Library Association, 1965), p. 22.

has since existed in the Catholic branches of the Western Church, the attitude which affirms that the Spirit is the "soul of the church," existing in, for, and through the church. Schweizer indicates how thought concerning the work of the Holy Spirit changed with this conception of the church.

It is no longer so, that a man whom God marks out by the gift of the Spirit is appointed to a particular ministry, but rather the man who is duly appointed to an office is guaranteed to possess the Spirit of God along with it.<sup>5</sup>

Quite obviously, such a perspective increases the power and authority of the church while diminishing the role of the Holy Spirit.

The Catholic tendency to limit the work of the Spirit to the life and function of the institutional church was directly and forthrightly challenged by the Reformers.

For the Reformers . . . the testimony of the Holy Spirit was related primarily to the efficacy of the Word i. e. to the power of its content to communicate itself as a living reality to the hearer and the reader.<sup>6</sup>

The classical Protestant position has been to associate the work of the Holy Spirit with the hearing of the Word in faith. Unfortunately, this position has often been interpreted in such a way as to

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<sup>5</sup> Eduard Schweizer, Spirit of God (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1960), p. 108.

<sup>6</sup> George S. Hendry, The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology (Westminster Press, 1956), p. 90.

make the creative Spirit of God a virtual prisoner to the words of the Bible and theological doctrine. Tillich aptly describes a dominant tendency in classical Protestantism: "The Spiritual Presence . . . impact was replaced by an intellectual acknowledgment of the doctrine of forgiveness by grace alone."<sup>7</sup> This conservative Protestant tendency to limit the work of the Spirit by the words of the Bible, along with the Catholic tendency to limit the work of the Spirit to the life and functions of the church, has greatly diminished the role of the Holy Spirit in Western ecclesiastical thought and practice. Such tendencies hardly provide a sound basis for understanding and appreciating the Holy Spirit as the creative dynamic element of the Christian heritage.

In addition to the Catholic view of the church and the conservative Protestant view of the Bible, another more recent factor has come to the fore which has tended to diminish the significance of the Holy Spirit in the Western Church. That factor is Western man's changing cosmological presuppositions. The point is that Western man with supposedly scientific cosmological presuppositions has found it increasingly difficult to hold and appreciate a

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<sup>7</sup>Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951-63), III, 128.

concept of the Holy Spirit as a dynamic, life-giving power operative in all aspects of life. The problem is that many in the West still operate with Newtonian concepts concerning the nature of matter, concepts which inevitably lead to a mechanistic determinism and reductionism as far as the created order is concerned, often placing God on the periphery. Indeed, if God has any meaning at all within this cosmological framework, it is within the context of religious and moral experience, not within the created order itself. Such a view of reality is far removed from African dynamism which sees divine energy and vital force operative in even the minutest aspects of life.

These attitudes concerning the relation of the Holy Spirit to the church, to the Bible, and to the cosmological structure are ones which implicitly and explicitly influence the Western missionary as he attempts to evaluate the dynamic elements in his own heritage and in African culture. Such a perspective makes him wary and critical of spontaneous and ecstatic religious behavior, and has undoubtedly gone a long way toward making the worship and polity of many African mission churches little more than copies of their European counterparts. All this is a way of saying that the dominant Western perspective concerning the nature and work of the Holy Spirit is, in fact, one of the problems to be faced

in attempting to relate the Holy Spirit to African dynamism.

An evergrowing cadre of missionaries and African Christian leaders are becoming convinced that the Western missionary enterprise needs to alter its perspective and strategy if it expects to encourage the growth and maturation of a truly African church. Bishop Bengt Sundkler indicates one probable direction of such a church.

The really indigenous African church in the future will orientate itself away from Western intellectualism and show a sense for the rich and generous orchestration of African emotional life.<sup>8</sup>

In essence, Sundkler is saying what others have long suspected: that it is not possible to divorce an African's religious attitudes from his world-view. This fact has been manifested in numerous ways. One such manifestation is the fact that hundreds of thousands of Africans choose not to participate in mission-organized churches often termed, "the white man's church". Instead, many of them have joined Zionist sect groups many of which are a syncretistic mixture of Christianity and traditional African religion. While it is partly true that Africans often join these groups in reaction to the European-dominated organizations, it is also true

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<sup>8</sup> Bengt G. M. Sundkler, The Christian Ministry in Africa (London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 121.

that they find in these sects a meaningful and indigenous expression of worship and polity. In addition to this, many who choose to remain in the mission-organized churches find their real source of power and strength, not with their local minister, but with the local witchdoctor. The Zulu, *Credo Mutwa*, aptly describes an attitude more prevalent among African Christians than any minister or missionary would care to admit.

The ordinary Bantu, no matter how educated or "civilized," are still firmly rooted to the beliefs of their forefathers. No matter how they have been subjected to Christian influences, they still have greater confidence in their local nganga (or witchdoctor) than in the local mission priest.<sup>9</sup>

While Mutwa is obviously overstating a point, he, nevertheless, witnesses to a tendency among African Christians that has long perplexed and plagued both missionaries and African pastors.

This tendency to return to traditional religion during times of crises aptly illustrates the fact that Christianity has not as yet become an indigenous part of African culture. Even in the onslaught of Westernization and secularization, the African is apt to look for his strength and identity in the traditions, thought-forms, and expressive behavior of his own heritage.

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<sup>9</sup> Vusamazulu Credo Mutwa, *Indaba, My Children* (Johannesburg, South Africa: Blue Crane Books, 1964), p. 469.

The challenge now facing the missionary movement in Africa is one of altering both perspective and strategy in such a way that the Christian faith might grow and express itself within the African cultural matrix. This study is directed toward that end. The challenge of such a study makes it no less complex for it must necessarily be interdisciplinary in nature. The first task of this study, undertaken in Chapter II, will be to analyze the concept of vital force in African dynamism. We will attempt to discover how and why this concept is so intimately related to the African worldview. This chapter will rely heavily upon the approach and insights of social anthropology. In Chapter III we will be discussing the concept of the Holy Spirit in historical perspective, attempting to discover the nature and work of the Holy Spirit in the light of the Bible and Christian thought. The thrust of this chapter will be to discover the distinctive elements in the Christian concept of the Holy Spirit in contrast to the vital force concept of African dynamism and thereafter to relate the two ideas. In Chapter IV we will attempt to discuss the Holy Spirit in contemporary perspective, relying on the insights of Tillichian theology and Jungian depth psychology, and relating these contemporary insights to the historical perspective and African dynamism. In the final chapter

we will attempt to make some specific suggestions relevant to a missionary strategy for Africa.



## CHAPTER II

### VITAL FORCE AND AFRICAN DYNAMISM

From the perspective of his years of missionary service in Africa, Father Placide Tempels has suggested a principle by which Bantu philosophy can be understood and interpreted. He says:

The key principle in Bantu philosophy is that of vital force. The activating and final aim of all Bantu effort is only intensification of vital force. To protect or to increase vital force, that is the motive and profound meaning of all their practices. It is the idea which animates the life of the "muntu", the only thing for which he is ready to suffer and sacrifice himself.<sup>1</sup>

Inasmuch as Father Tempels seldom illustrates his principle of vital force with anthropological data gathered from his study of African expressive behavior, we could say that his vital force principle has the characteristics of a generalization. Nevertheless, there is enough substance in Father Tempels' thesis to merit further consideration and investigation. In order to scrutinize this concept of vital force, we must examine it in relation to the world-views and expressive behavior of several African

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<sup>1</sup> Placide Tempels, Bantu Philosophy (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1959), p. 114.

tribes. In so doing, we hope to arrive at some conclusions of our own as to how the Christian faith can be effectively communicated in order to become an indigenous part of African life.

In his criticism of various methods of studying primitive religions, the anthropologist, E. E. Evans-Pritchard has suggested that "a number of systematic studies of primitive philosophies has to be made."<sup>2</sup> It is only after making such comparative studies that one is qualified in drawing some general conclusions about primitive society. While it would be impossible to make a detailed comparison of systematic anthropological studies in this chapter, it is at the same time necessary to see the concept of vital force in relation to the expressive behavior of some specific African tribes. The tribes we have chosen are the Tonga of Mozambique, the Lovedu of the Transvaal, and the Dinka of Sudan. In our attempt to analyze the nature and function of vital force in African dynamism, we will be scrutinizing these tribes from the standpoint of social structure as well as from the standpoint of cosmological and religious structure.

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<sup>2</sup>E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Nuer Religion (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 315.

## I. A STUDY OF THREE AFRICAN TRIBES

### A. The Tonga of Mozambique

1. Social Structure: The Tonga tribe consists of at least five language groups situated between the Save River and Delgoa in southern Mozambique. This area is chiefly composed of descendants of Bantu who probably migrated from the north in the twelfth century. Today the population in this area is approximately 1, 700, 000. In the sixteenth century the Portuguese colonized this area, especially developing those areas situated near sea ports. During most of the nineteenth century most of the clans belonging to the Tonga tribe were conquered by the invading army of Zulus from South Africa.

The basic Tonga social structure is patrilineal in nature and is built on the basic units of family, village, and clan, which are governed by the father, the headman, and the chief respectively. The clans receive their names from the old chief who was their alleged original head many years ago. Junod says, "The chief is the center of national life. It is in him the clan becomes conscious of its unity."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Henri A. Junod, The Life of a South African Tribe (Hyde Park, New York: University Books, 1962), I, 367.

Because of his power and authority, the chief serves not only as a figurehead and symbol of unity, but also as a figure of justice.

The chief, along with his counsellors, decides the important judicial matters.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, it is the task of the chief to initiate

the ritual of biting the first fruits after harvest, which is called the ritual of luma. The Tonga chief, however, is no despot or

dictator; rather, his job is to provide for and save his people.<sup>5</sup>

His authority is spread to the villages in that the chief often places some of his functionaries in charge there. In short, the tradition and social structure of Tonga life provides for a stratified system of authority. It should be noted, however, that this structure is rapidly changing in the wake of the onslaught of civilization. More than fifty years ago Junod said: "My description of the national life of the tribe still applies to some parts of Tongaland; but changes are coming so fast that soon it will have nothing more than historic value."<sup>6</sup>

Although the Tonga do breed cattle and hunt game, they basically depend on agriculture for a living.<sup>7</sup> This basic marginal agriculture, which consists of cultivating corn, groundnuts, and

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., I, 434.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., I, 408.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., I, 541.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., I, 2.

various grains, is done by both men and women. With such a high degree of dependence on agriculture, it should be noted that rain often means the difference between starvation and plenty. Needless to say, this need for rain is reflected in Tonga religious behavior.

Another item affecting the changing social structure of Tonga society is the fact that, inasmuch as the subsistence agriculture of southern Mozambique provides little opportunity to earn capital, over 100,000 men from Tongaland find it necessary to work for a period of eighteen months in the gold and coal mines of South Africa. Quite obviously, this has not only made a difference to the structure of village and family life, but has tended to modify the world-view and perspective of the people as a whole.

2. Cosmological and Religious Structure: Absolutely basic to the Tonga concept of religion is the concept of life or wutomi. This could best be described as a state of abundance which includes health, fertility, well-being, and peace. The Tonga religious system is geared toward experiencing wutomi to its fullest.

The traditional Tonga cosmology is quite primitive with the concept of heaven, or tilo, above and earth, or misava, below. At times tilo is conceived of as a large vault, at other times as a

transcendent, impersonal sky god who is "more a personification of nature than anything else."<sup>8</sup> Tilo has the basic power to kill and to give life and is often associated with thunder, lightning, and the birth of twins.<sup>9</sup> It is interesting to note that in the basic Tonga cosmology there is no dualism. Tilo can do either good or evil acts. Nevertheless, this transcendent god is seldom talked about or invoked. It seems to have little contact with the people.

On the other hand, most central to Tonga religious and ritual life is the worship of ancestors. Anyone who dies becomes an ancestor-god and must be remembered and revered as such by the living members of his family. Ancestors have powers to bless and punish, to grant or deny wutomi. For this reason they are worshiped to win their favor and propitiated when they are angry.<sup>10</sup>

The core of Tonga ritual life consists in making sacrifices to these ancestors. This ritual gathering is called, mhamba. During the mhamba, goats, grains, and beers are sacrificed to the ancestors. Since there is no formal priesthood in Tonga society, the eldest man makes the sacrifices to the familial gods

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., I, 446.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., I, 441.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., I, 427.

which have power over their descendents only.<sup>11</sup> On occasion, perhaps once a year, the national gods are approached with a sacrifice by the chief and his functionaries. This is usually a sacrifice associated with asking the ancestors for rain.<sup>12</sup> A number of interesting things can be noted concerning sacrifice in Tonga ritual life. For one thing, the animal sacrifices are usually already dead at the time of the sacrificial offering. This would seem to indicate that blood plays little part in the Tonga concept of sacrifice. During the mhamba and afterwards, all the sacrificed food is eaten. The central liturgical prayer at the mhamba is the expression of the wish for the people to "live well and not quarrel."<sup>13</sup> Junod makes two relevant observations about ancestor worship and the mhamba:

It is a function aimed at keeping alive and strengthening the hierarchy which is the main feature of the social order.<sup>14</sup>

It is essentially a ritualistic act with very little place for true religious feeling. Adoration is practically non-existent.<sup>15</sup>

It needs to be noted that ancestors are seen as divine in terms of

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., II, 428.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., II, 426.

<sup>13</sup> Neftali Mbanze, A Ngango wa MuTshwa (Cleveland, Transvaal: Central Mission Press, 1961), p. 80.

<sup>14</sup> Junod, op. cit., II, 427.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., II, 428.

their power, but human in terms of their moral turpitude. Often the people simply ask of their ancestors "that they may live in peace, and that their gods may interfere with them as little as possible."<sup>16</sup>

We mentioned that ancestor spirits usually affect only the members of the family from which they come. In some cases, however, some spirits, especially those of foreigners, can possess individuals and thereby require the process of exorcism.<sup>17</sup> This form of spirit or mandiki possession is usually associated with the Zulus from South Africa and with the VaNdao from north of the Save River in Mozambique.<sup>18</sup> The process of exorcising such a spirit requires everything from beating a big drum to the ritual use of goat's blood.<sup>19</sup> The central object, however, is not so much to exorcise the spirit completely, but to leave the spirit in at least partial control. Many healers and all traditional exorcisers in Tonga society are those who have been possessed by such a spirit.<sup>20</sup> In fact, it is becoming increasingly true that many

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., II, 428.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., II, 367.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., II, 479.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., II, 491.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., II, 499.



religious functionaries desire such spirit possession because "they feel they have no power without it."<sup>21</sup> In short, Tonga witchdoctors, diviners, and exorcists all have this in common: they are all trying to restore wutomi or vital force either with medicine, with knowledge from divining bones, or by exorcising a possessing power.

In the content of Tonga society, spiritual power is seen in terms of life or vital force in which everything participates to some extent. Man's participation in vital force is very closely related to a right relationship with his ancestors. Connected to this is the necessity for man to consult witchdoctors, diviners, and exorcists who are all thought to have a special charisma in relation to this vital force.

#### B. The Lovedu of the Transvaal

1. Social Structure: The Lovedu, who reside below the Drakensberg escarpment of the north-eastern Transvaal in South Africa, are ruled by a divine queen often referred to as, "the rain queen." The system of divine royalty seems to have developed in the process of this tribe's contact with the empire of Monomatapa

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<sup>21</sup> Mbanze, op. cit., p. 96.

(now Rhodesia) from whence they migrated in the seventeenth century.<sup>22</sup> In spite of some unique emphases, the Lovedu follow many of the practices and customs of the neighboring Tonga, not to mention those of other contiguous tribes. The Lovedu survive on subsistence cultivation of crops which include corn, ground-nuts, and grains. They also raise cattle which are used largely in the marriage contract. Like the neighboring Tonga, rain makes the difference between sufficient food and starvation. It is in this context that Krige says: "Rain . . . is one of the ultimate bases of man's sense of security. . . . It is the supreme justification of the divine right of the queen to rule."<sup>23</sup>

One of the unique emphases of the Lovedu social structure is the place and power given to women, not to mention the specific power of the divine queen. Through a complicated process women can at times marry and have many wives. This marriage process makes it possible for many families to have kinship ties with the

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<sup>22</sup> J. D. and E. J. Krige, "The Lovedu of the Transvaal," in Daryll Forde (ed.), African Worlds (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 55

<sup>23</sup> Eileen J. Krige, The Realm of the Rain Queen (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 271.

divine rain queen who also has wives.<sup>24</sup> "The homage in wives that is paid to her for giving men the blessings of rain is also the means for giving the network of kinship ties."<sup>25</sup>

In a society that is mutually related like this, the chief social values are moderation, temperance, compromise, and agreement, not to mention respect for the personality and rights of others.<sup>26</sup> Competition, anger, jealousy, and rivalry are not tolerated. It should also be mentioned that in this society parental responsibilities and imperatives toward children are governed by the kinship bond to the tribe as a whole rather than to the individual moral obedience and conduct of the child to his parents.

2. Cosmological and Religious Structure: The thing that interests the Lovedu the most is not so much the origin and creation of the world; it is, rather, the continuity of the forces of nature, especially as they benefit the Lovedu people.<sup>27</sup> The forces which bring life are those which pertain to the movement of clouds and the making of rain.<sup>28</sup> In practical and ritual behavior

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<sup>24</sup>J. D. Krige, op. cit., pp. 57-58. <sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 78. <sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

coolness is considered good while heat is considered bad or evil.<sup>29</sup>

The connection of coolness with rain is obvious. In this context, myths related to a sky god and primogeniture are of little concern to the Lovedu whose ritual and cosmology is more related to the practical rather than the theoretical. In fact, the Lovedu traditional religion is practical in nature "in which rites have more importance than right belief."<sup>30</sup>

The Lovedue do not see man and nature as essentially opposed. Rather, they think the cosmic forces which are expressions of vital force are controllable for the benefit of man.<sup>31</sup>

This control is accomplished in several ways: through the use of power concentrated in certain persons and objects, by appeal to ancestor gods, and through the divinity of the queen who has a special affinity with nature. The Lovedu diviners, like their Tonga counterparts, depend on their wisdom to read the divining bones and prescribe the right medicine in the interest of health and well-being. These skills are inherited or acquired through spirit possession or guidance.<sup>32</sup> Ancestor worship seems to play a less significant role in Lovedu society than it does among the

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<sup>29</sup>E. J. Krige, op. cit., p. 226.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>31</sup>J. D. Krige, op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

Tonga. The somewhat diminished role of ancestor worship is undoubtedly related to the fact of the divine queen's special relation to nature and to the ancestor spirits. Krige indicates the importance of the divine queen to Lovedu society:

Man's sense of security in the face of personal misfortunes can be re-established by magic and religion, but orderliness of cosmic laws is guaranteed only by the relationship to the queen.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to spiritual power associated with the queen, diviners, and certain ancestors, the Lovedu believe in evil caused by witches or balovi. Witchcraft is due to conscious evil practices of men directed toward men they hate.<sup>34</sup> Krige makes this perceptive statement:

Witch beliefs reflect the Lovedu notion that almost all the misfortunes that befall men, whether sickness, barrenness, lightning that strikes men, huts, or cattle, failure of an individual's crops, or death of his children are caused by the hatred and envy in men's hearts.<sup>35</sup>

In short, we see in the Lovedu society that the beneficial aspect of vital force is very closely related to human attitudes and conduct, especially in relation to the culture and its kinship value

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<sup>33</sup>E. J. Krige, op. cit., p. 283.

<sup>34</sup>J. D. Krige, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

structure. Nevertheless, there is another context in which the concept of vital force must be discussed, namely in the cult of spirit possession. In almost all cases the possessing spirit is an ancestor of the Lovedu tribe and not a possessing foreign spirit.<sup>36</sup> According to Krige, while such spirit possession often involves frenzied dancing and speaking in strange tongues,<sup>37</sup> the bearing of the people is usually quiet and dignified when considered as a whole.<sup>38</sup> It is interesting to note that this phenomenon, while not appealing to all the members of Lovedu society, "has a popular appeal in these more insecure days."<sup>39</sup> A real parallel can be noted here with the rise and spread of mandiki possession among the Tonga of Mozambique. It will also be noted that a similar type of spirit possession has been on the increase in Dinka society.

### C. The Dinka of Sudan

1. Social Structure: The Dinka reside around the swamps of the central Nile basin in Southern Sudan. They are a polygamous, patrilineal people numbering about 900,000. They are also a mobile people often finding it necessary to move at least twice a

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<sup>36</sup>E. J. Krige, op. cit., p. 242.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 248.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 242.

year, partly because of the annual river floods which cover much of the land, and partly because of the necessity of moving with the cattle herds on which the tribe basically depends.

In the light of this, the basic political group is not the village or settlement; rather it is the cattle herding group or the cattle camp.<sup>40</sup> A number of these groups make a sub-tribe and several sub-tribes make a tribe. Within each tribe or sub-tribe are to be found members of the two basic clans of Dinka society: the priestly clan or masters of the fishing spear, and the commoner or the warrior clan.<sup>41</sup> Because of their special relation to powerful clan divinities, the spear masters not only have spiritual power, but virtual political power as well.<sup>42</sup>

Some other factors need to be mentioned concerning the social structure of Dinka society. For one thing, it seems to be necessary for young men to make a significant break with their fathers when they marry.<sup>43</sup> This is a much more significant break than occurs in the Lovedu and Tonga tribes. Another factor

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<sup>40</sup> Godfrey Lienhardt, Divinity and Experience (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 7.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

indicated by Lienhardt is that the political autonomy of Dinka society has been more undermined in recent years: "Everyone now wants to be master," say the masters of the fishing-spear.<sup>44</sup>

Absolutely fundamental to understanding Dinka social structure and values is an understanding of the importance of cattle to Dinka life as a whole. Lienhardt expresses it this way:

Their cattle do, in fact, bring and hold the human group together; their interests meet in the herd. . . . Sacrifice is made equally for the benefit of men and of cattle, for the whole group, cattle and men together suffers and thrives.<sup>45</sup>

So important are cattle to the Dinka social structure that children are named after cattle which have been sacrificed.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, human relationships between human beings and the divine are regulated by the transfer of cattle in sacrifice. In the same way, conflicts are resolved by the transfer of cattle to the offended ones.<sup>47</sup> It is through cattle that the continuity as well as paternity are validated in Dinka society. As Lienhardt perceptively says, "A man cannot be fully Dinka without them."<sup>48</sup>

2. Cosmological and Religious Structure: Although of non-Bantu stock and residing thousands of miles from the Lovedu and

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 27.



the Tonga, the Dinka espouse a number of amazingly similar religious values. "Children and cattle multiplying and prospering from generation to generation are the ultimate value of Dinka life and the only assurance of a kind of immortality."<sup>49</sup> Lienhardt is even more explicit by indicating that the supreme gift the Dinka ask for is life, a word that is the same as that used for breath in their language.<sup>50</sup> Dinka religious practice must be seen in the context of these goals which are considered ultimate. In this context, the relation of Dinka to Divinity is not unlike the relation the Tonga and Lovedu have with their ancestors. "Divinity is sometimes asked to come near to men and help them, and sometimes to remain away from men and not trouble them."<sup>51</sup>

In addition to the universal Divinity are also specific free-divinities and clan-divinities, which are a part of Divinity in a more comprehensive sense. The function of these seems to correspond in one sense to the ancestors of Tonga and Dinka society. It should be stated, however, that ancestor worship per se is not practiced in Dinka society. The free-divinities and clan-divinities seem to have specific day-to-day relationships with people. For instance, a free-divinity is known by a name and corresponds to

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

experiences of all Dinka people.<sup>52</sup> The clan-divinities, which can be an animate or other object, seem to represent "the idea and permanent values of a generation for the Dinka."<sup>53</sup>

The power of Divinity is appropriated and dispensed by at least two classes of people: by the diviners, and by the masters of the fishing spear. Diviners have power in relation to free-divinities. Often these diviners gain power from spirit possession. Their specific function is to specify the power that is affecting a particular human condition.<sup>54</sup> They then recommend some course of action. The masters of the fishing spear "are thought to have more life in them than they need."<sup>55</sup> Because of this, they can, therefore, sustain the lives of their people and cattle. In fact, they are sometimes called "the holders of life" because of their special relationship to clan-divinities.<sup>56</sup> In essence, they possess vital force. The important and significant power of the spear masters is "insight into truth and of speaking the 'true word' . . ."<sup>57</sup> It is for this reason that the spear masters are considered not only priests, but also de facto political leaders.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 247.

Thus we see that the collective unity of Dinka life, not to mention the Dinka experience of vitality, is closely associated with their relationships to the masters of the fishing spear and to their cattle. Dinka ritual life is formed on this fact. The ritual associated with the spear masters is the ritual of their being buried alive. In this act Lienhardt sees the Dinka asserting their own "collective immortality."<sup>58</sup>

The Dinka know that the master dies. What they represent in contriving the death which they give him is the conservation of the "life" which they themselves think they receive from him . . . and not the conservation of his own personal life.<sup>59</sup>

Lienhardt then follows with this perceptive statement: "Burial must be seen to transform the experience of a leader's death into a concentrated public experience of vitality . . ."<sup>60</sup>

In a very real sense, the public experience of vitality can also be related to the sacrifice of cattle. As the life is released from the beast that is being sacrificed, "its vitality is made available to others."<sup>61</sup> Lienhardt again shows the relation of sacrifice to Dinka life: "Sacrifice thus includes a recreation of the basis of local corporate life, in the full sense of those words."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 319.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 316.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 317.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 207.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 234.

Thus we see that the concepts of spiritual power and vital force have a significant place in the Dinka social and religious structure. In this respect they parallel the Tonga and the Lovedu. The question is: How are we to interpret the various expressions of vital force in these three tribes?

## II. AN INTERPRETATION

### A. Principles of Interpretation

Any serious attempt to understand the nature of vital force as expressed in African dynamism necessitates the use of some basic anthropological principles of interpretation. While it is impossible to subject the concept of vital force to empirical scrutiny, we can gain insight concerning the way it manifests itself in the expressive behavior of the Tonga, the Lovedu, and the Dinka. This in itself is beneficial to the practical purpose of this study. What principles can be used in understanding and interpreting religious behavior?

Certainly one of the most useful and perceptive principles for interpreting religious behavior is the one expounded and developed by Radcliffe-Brown in his monumental study, The Andaman Islanders. He says:

The social function and ceremonial customs of the Andaman Islanders is to maintain and to transmit from one generation to another the emotional dispositions on which the society (as it is constituted) depends for its existence.<sup>63</sup>

In short, Radcliffe-Brown is saying that the expressive behavior involved in religion is to be interpreted in the light of the particular sentiments on which any given society depends for its existence. Life or vitality is experienced when these sentiments are expressed and affirmed.

Another principle which is helpful for understanding the particular form of religious behavior has been explicated by Guy Swanson. Swanson feels that religious behavior must be seen in the light of the basic constitutional structures of social relationships in a given society. "Experiences which seem closest to having the supernatural's characteristics are those connected with the primordial and constitutional structures of social relationships."<sup>64</sup>

The anthropological concept most appropriate, however, to our study of vital force in African dynamism is the one explicated

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<sup>63</sup> A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, The Andaman Islanders (Cambridge: University Press, 1933), p. 234.

<sup>64</sup> Guy E. Swanson, The Birth of the Gods (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), p. 28.

by Evans-Pritchard in Nuer Religion. In attempting to understand the dominant motif of religious behavior he says:

The test of what is the dominant motif is usually, perhaps always, to what a people attributes danger and sickness and other misfortunes and what steps they take to avoid or eliminate them.<sup>65</sup>

In short, Evans-Pritchard is saying that power and real vital force is to be associated with danger behavior. It is impossible to discover what has power or vitality for a given tribe without analyzing the expressive and social and religious behavior.

While we will be using the hermeneutical principles of Radcliffe-Brown, Swanson, and Evans-Pritchard in our consideration of vital force in the religion and social structure of the three forementioned tribes, we will at the same time be aware of the ever-present danger of becoming reductionistic.

#### B. The Relation of Vital Force to Survival and Unity

As we attempt to evaluate the religious behavior of the Tonga, the Lovedu, and the Dinka in light of the principles of interpretation already mentioned, one of the first and fundamental questions to ask is: On what do these tribes depend for survival?

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<sup>65</sup>Evans-Pritchard, op. cit., p. 315.

In answering this question we hope to be provided with a clue as to how vital force can be interpreted. Clearly, this is a question that would fall into the category of the principle identified with Radcliffe-Brown relating religion to the maintenance and transmission of the sentiments on which a society depends for its existence. In our studies of these tribes we have already answered this question by indicating that the Tonga and the Lovedu are primarily dependent on subsistence agriculture which is related to rain, while the Dinka are dependent on their cattle. These basic survival needs are well illustrated in ritual and religious behavior. The ancestors of the Tonga and Lovedu are often asked for rain and a year of plenty in harvest. The Lovedu rain queen derives much of her power and authority from the fact that through her use of special medicines and through her special contact with ancestors she can provide her tribe with rain. It is through the religious and ritual behavior toward their cattle that the Dinka reinforce the fact that they are dependent on those cattle for survival. Certainly Radcliffe-Brown sums up what transpires during such ritual acts:

He is made to feel (or to act as though he felt) that his life is one of continually repeated dangers from which he can only be preserved by conforming to the customs of society as have been handed down by tradition.<sup>67</sup>

We can say, then, that vital force can be closely associated with that on which a tribe depends for survival. With the Tonga and Lovedu it is fertility and abundance in harvest; with the Dinka it is the life-giving power associated with their cattle.

Very closely related to survival, either in terms of providing and protecting food or in terms of defense against foreign and hostile elements, is the concept of unity. In fact, survival without unity is impossible in traditional African society. Certainly, we must view much ritual behavior as unifying behavior. Lienhardt's comments concerning the cattle sacrifice of the Dinka are germane at this point. "Sacrifice thus includes a re-creation of the basis of local corporate life."<sup>68</sup> The same could be said for the family and clan *mhamba* of the Tonga as well as the various rituals associated with the Lovedu rain queen. Needless to say, in these rituals in which the unity of the tribe is affirmed by sacrifice, dancing, and singing, the individual becomes acutely aware

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<sup>67</sup> Radcliffe-Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

<sup>68</sup> Lienhardt, *op. cit.*, p. 234.



that he is participating in a power or life force other than and greater than himself, a power which manifests itself and is experienced in all acts in which unity is affirmed. In another context we hope to indicate how the Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit can be related to this aspect of African dynamism.

### C. Vital Force and Religious Expression

In examining the religions of the Tonga, Lovedu, and Dinka with respect to their concept of experience and vital force, we see that the concept of life is basic to them all. Evans-Pritchard's comment concerning the Nuer could be applied to these tribes as well: "Nuer are asking for life, but not just life in the sense of living, but of living abundantly, free from troubles and sufferings which make life, as we say, not worth living."<sup>69</sup> Certainly Tempels' concept of vital force is basic to the religious structure of these three tribes. Furthermore, this power is neither essentially good or bad; it can, however, produce either good or bad results. Another thing that was mentioned in connection with these three tribes is the fact that good effects of the power can be appropriated and the bad effects of the power avoided through the

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

proper use of sacrifice, ritual medicines, and diviners. In each case it is the well-being of the individual and the tribe that is the central issue.

At this juncture we need to reconsider Father Tempels' basic thesis, especially that part which refers to the fact that the only thing for which a "muthtu" is willing to suffer and sacrifice himself is for the intensification of vital force.<sup>70</sup> To the eyes of the Westerner, such a sacrifice and such an intensification could be interpreted as a very individualistic thing. In the light of what we have said thus far concerning vital force and the three African tribes, nothing could be farther from the truth. The vital force mentioned thus far is experienced in the midst of community and is intimately related to the survival, unity, and order of that community. Spirituality is ultimately related to the vitality and well-being of the community in which the individual participates. John Taylor aptly describes the basic African perspective: "To be human is to be social and to be social is to be spiritual."<sup>71</sup>

Our studies, however, have also indicated that there is an

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<sup>70</sup>Tempels, op. cit., p. 114.

<sup>71</sup>John V. Taylor, The Primal Vision (London: SCM Press, 1963), p. 38.

increasing place for individual experiences of spiritual power in these societies. The very existence of religious functionaries and diviners suggests the danger associated with this power. Radcliffe-Brown's comment that any contact with power is dangerous would apply to these three African tribes. It is precisely this close contact with danger which gives the diviner the authority he has. It is interesting to note that in recent times the diviners of all these tribes are coming more and more to regard spirit possession as a norm. Such possession often involves a trance, the use of an unknown language, and allegedly extraordinary manifestations of wisdom which can be useful to individuals and to the tribe as a whole. It is also interesting to note that in all three tribes people who are not religious functionaries are experiencing such phenomena in increasing numbers. It is appropriate to note that Evans-Pritchard not only attributes such occurrences among the Nuer to individualization in religion, but to a certain social disintegration as well.<sup>72</sup> This insight concerning the change in traditional Nuer social structure in correlation to spirit possession could apply to the Dinka, Tonga, and Lovedu also. At any rate, these societies seem to be using the individualized

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<sup>72</sup> Evans-Pritchard, op. cit., p. 310.

expressions of vital force in connection with the more traditional ritual behavior.

We see, then, that Father Tempels' thesis of vital force does have relevance for understanding the Tonga, Lovedu, and Dinka societies, if we consider the experience in connection with the communal sentiments of those tribes. These tribes do have as their motivation the increase of life and the life force in the tribal context. This is manifested in all their expressive religious behavior which includes their ritual of sacrifice and propitiation as well as their attitudes toward anything that would take this away. An issue not covered by Father Tempels is the increase of individualized charisma as manifested in the growing importance of the cults of diviners and the spirit possessed.

In this chapter we have tried to indicate that the concept of vital force is a valid principle for understanding African dynamism as it is expressed communally in traditional form. We have indicated in several places that the Africans tend to view the life-giving, transcendent power from a practical and experiential standpoint, rather than from a theoretical perspective. In short, to the extent that the transcendent is immanent and giving or denying life, it is treated and respected by the Africans as a de facto power or vital force.

We have also noted that with the breakdown of the traditional social structure and with increasing contact with outside influences, there has been an increase of individualized spirit possession which includes ecstatic expression and, in many cases, increased power for the possessed in the community. With the increased development and secularization of Africa, we can expect to see an increase of individualistic religious behavior of this kind. Perhaps this form of experiencing the immanence of vital force will increase in direct proportion to the decrease of ancestor worship.

Radcliffe-Brown has this to say about the decrease of ancestor worship: "The disintegration of social structure and decay of the ancestral cult proceed together."<sup>73</sup> With such a disintegration we could expect to find traditional African religion replaced by an increase of the Zionist cultic forms of religion which, not only give place for spirit possession phenomena including prophetism, but also make significant use of myth and symbol in their ritual. This is precisely what has happened in South Africa. It could be a pattern for much religious expression in the Africa of the future.

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<sup>73</sup>A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, Structure and Function in Primitive Society (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1952), p. 164.

The golden thread of unity which is common to traditional African religion, and to its more charismatic prophetic expressions is the concept of vital force, a life-giving power. Surely Father Tempels' insight is appropriate:

The thing which most inhibits pagans from conversion to Christianity and from giving up magical rites is the fear of attenuating this vital energy through ceasing to have recourse to the natural powers which sustain it.<sup>74</sup>

Indeed, any missionary effort in Africa will want to consider the ways in which its doctrine of the Holy Spirit as an immanent, life-giving power can be related and applied to the vital force concept in African dynamism. In the chapter to follow we shall be discussing the nature and work of the Holy Spirit from historical perspective attempting to see how this concept of God as a life-giving presence and power is distinct from and yet can be related to the vital force concept in African dynamism.

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<sup>74</sup>Tempels, op. cit., p. 32.

## CHAPTER III

### THE HOLY SPIRIT IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

One of the most pressing and perplexing problems with which Christian workers in Africa are faced is the problem of adjudicating and evaluating the various manifestations of vital force in African expressive behavior. The proclivity of those associated with Zionist sects and revitalization movements is to insist that all manifestations resulting in extraordinary power and insight are manifestations of the Spirit of God. While many leaders in the mission-organized churches are dubious of the generality of such claims, they are nonetheless concerned to distinguish how God does act as Holy Spirit so that they can discern and evaluate the spirits at work in the complex of African culture. In the process of relating the Holy Spirit to African dynamism a necessary and important phase is the understanding of the distinctive nature of the Holy Spirit in contradistinction to the vital force concept in African dynamism. Such a study of contrast and comparison will necessarily involve a discussion of the Holy Spirit in historical perspective, a perspective which attempts to understand how the concept of the Holy Spirit has been distinctively understood by the biblical writers and by the Christian community.

## I. THE SPIRIT IN THE BIBLE

As one attempts to glean the meaning of the concept, Spirit of God, from the Bible, he becomes increasingly aware that this concept is inextricably linked to the biblical writers' changing views of God and the changing exigencies of history. This is a way of saying that in order to view the development or decline of a particular aspect of this concept, one needs to be conscious of the historical settings which helped formulate the idea.

### A. Spirit in the Old Testament

Within the context of such a historical perspective, the most logical place to begin an analysis of the thinking concerning the concept, Spirit of God, is with a discussion of this concept in Israel's pre-history. In this tradition the word, Spirit, almost always carried with it the connotation of air in motion, breath, and energy. Spirit, however, was not considered an integral part of nature. The concept carried with it a "supernatural meaning to mark agencies operating upon man from without and beyond nature."<sup>1</sup> During this particular period, the activity of the Spirit

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<sup>1</sup> Henry P. Van Dusen, Spirit, Son and Father (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 37.



was most often associated with special visitations to special individuals such as prophets and charismatic leaders. Samson was considered strong because of the Spirit of God. "The woman bore a son and called his name Samson . . . and the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him . . . And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him."<sup>2</sup> During this period of Israel's pre-history, these special visitations of the Spirit were most often associated with ecstatic prophets. It is interesting to note that the frenzy and ecstasy were without moral connotation. A possessing spirit of God could be either good or evil.<sup>3</sup> The important fact for these prophets and spectators was the manifestation of supernatural power possessing an individual personality.

This somewhat primitive concept of Spirit was altered as it came to be redefined by the eighth century prophets, who were driven by an intense ethical consciousness. These prophets discredited frenzied and ecstatic behavior which demonstrated potency alone with little ethical sensitivity.<sup>4</sup> These prophets affirmed God to be a God of justice and righteousness. Any spirit which failed to demonstrate these ethical qualities was considered

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<sup>2</sup>Judges 13:24-25; 14:6.

<sup>3</sup>I Samuel 18:10.

<sup>4</sup>Van Dusen, op. cit., p. 40.

to be other than belonging to God. In this context, Spirit came to be understood as the personal activity of God's will working in history.<sup>5</sup> With this concept of God's Spirit, the eighth century prophets could not speak of the Spirit as falling on an individual and seizing his ego or personal center. Rather, they speak of God addressing his righteous will through his word to individual selves and to nations. "Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O people of Israel."<sup>6</sup>

After the concept of Spirit of God had been refined and re-defined by the eighth century prophets, it had little relevance or reality in Israel's day-to-day experience. The Spirit was considered both a reality of the past as well as an anticipated reality of the future. This attitude, seen in the later Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Joel, emphasized the fact that God had acted as Spirit creatively and redemptively in Israel's past and would in the future pour out his Spirit at the coming of the Messiah. This past-future motif was to become greatly exacerbated in the later apocalyptic Judaism. Another post-eighth-century attitude concerning the concept

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<sup>5</sup> Eduard Schweizer, Spirit of God (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1960), p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Amos 3:1.

of Spirit can be seen in the attempt to relate Spirit to the creation of the cosmos. This attitude, aptly reflected in Genesis and Job, affirmed that the same God who saved Israel was the one who breathed the breath of life into man while creating the universe. "By his Spirit God hath garnished the heavens."<sup>7</sup>

While one can detect several trends and emphases concerning the concept of Spirit in later Judaism, the salient emphasis was that the new age of the Spirit was something to be anticipated with the coming of the Messiah. To some extent the Greek concept of the Logos had penetrated the thought pattern of Judaism of this period. But even this concept came to be associated with Wisdom rather than with the concept of the Spirit of God.<sup>8</sup> In general, during this period of apocalyptic Judaism, more emphasis was placed on angelologies and dogma than on the present reality of God acting as Spirit. Van Dusen aptly summarizes the period:

Here, once more, are anticipations of developments in the thought of the faith in later ages when, again, awareness of the Living and potent Spirit of God as an immediately present reality had grown dim.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Job 26:13.

<sup>8</sup> Van Dusen, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

## B. The Spirit in the New Testament

In an attempt to understand the meaning of the concept of the Spirit in the New Testament, one needs to keep in mind two relevant facts: first, that the New Testament understanding of Spirit has its roots in the history and tradition of Israel, and second, that the Holy Spirit was a present reality in the primitive church in which the New Testament originated. Schweizer expresses the latter fact in this way: "Long before the Spirit was an article of doctrine it was a fact in the experience of the primitive Church."<sup>10</sup>

The continuity between the Old and New Testament concepts of Spirit can best be seen in Mark and Matthew. These two writers associate the word, Spirit, with the Old Testament idea of power to do certain things.<sup>11</sup> In almost all instances Spirit is spoken of in functional terms. It is the Spirit which comes at Jesus' baptism. The Spirit drives or leads Jesus into the wilderness. The fact is that while these Gospels show the Spirit in relation to the activity of Jesus, they rarely indicate that Jesus ever used the term, Holy Spirit. The most authentic statement of this

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<sup>10</sup>Schweizer, op. cit., p. 24.      <sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

kind seems to be concerning blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup>

Here the emphasis is on the fact that the power behind Jesus' miracles is, in fact, the Spirit.<sup>13</sup> With this emphasis we catch the indication, especially in Luke, that Jesus was considered a man of the Spirit.

The concept of Spirit plays a much more important role in Luke than in either Matthew or Mark. Here the Spirit is identified closely with the risen Christ who is present and acting. In fact, it is "through Jesus that the Spirit is given to the church."<sup>14</sup> In the Lukan accounts, the Spirit abides with all believers; it can be given and re-given when faith is present. Here the concept, "full of the Spirit,"<sup>15</sup> is used to indicate a dynamistic connotation of a fluid which fills man and leaves its mark on man.<sup>16</sup> Although Luke's Hellenist-like conception of the Spirit as substance is present in his writings, it is not the most important of his emphases. What is important is that manifestations of the Spirit are visible and ascertainable.<sup>17</sup> Luke emphasizes that the Spirit

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<sup>12</sup> Mark 2:29; Matthew 12:31.

<sup>13</sup> Van Dusen, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>14</sup> Schweizer, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>15</sup> Luke 4:12.

<sup>16</sup> Schweizer, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

which is associated with faith is also associated with such ecstatic phenomena as prophecy, glossolalia, and healings. Schweizer says in relating Luke to Old Testament thought: "Luke is still fairly close to the way of thinking which measures the work of the Spirit by its extraordinariness."<sup>18</sup> The important observation to note is that, while this Lukan concept of Spirit is conceived of as a power to fulfill a particular task, this power is at the same time given to all believers to enable the church to fulfill her mission in the world.

The Pauline concept of Spirit introduces a number of unique insights. One new element Paul introduces is an emphasis on relating life in the Spirit to salvation. In the Lukan accounts, the Spirit was given for a special deed or action. In Pauline thought, it is associated with union with Christ and salvation.<sup>19</sup> For Paul, this participation in new life meant, not only that man could participate in a new existence, but that he could experience the "first fruits" of what is to come.<sup>20</sup>

Paul's insights can be of help in attempting to evaluate various manifestations of religious behavior. According to Paul, the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>20</sup> Romans 8:23.

confession of Jesus as Lord is a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, Paul associates the work of the Holy Spirit with a life of love to the neighbor and the edification of the church. The essence of Paul's view concerning the gifts of the Spirit, set forth in I Corinthians chapters twelve to fourteen, is that the most spectacular gifts are not necessarily the most valuable. In this passage Paul is emphasizing, however, the mutual dependence of the gifts of the Spirit, rather than a hierarchy of valuable and less valuable gifts. Quite in contrast to Luke, Paul wishes to emphasize the Spirit's working in day-to-day helpfulness to the neighbor and to the Christian community. In Pauline thought, life in the Spirit means a life of love, joy, peace, and freedom from the stifling effect of the Jewish law.

While Paul does not condemn the proper and orderly use of ecstatic phenomena within the church, he is more concerned to emphasize that life in the Spirit is how God Himself becomes immanent to the human spirit. In this sense, Paul does personalize and ethicize the Spirit in a unique and creative way. In marked contrast to Gnostic thought and the ecstatic prophets of Israel, Paul does not conceive of the Spirit as a power which overcomes a

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<sup>21</sup> I Corinthians 12:2-3.

man's individuality. Rather, the Holy Spirit brings knowledge of God's saving presence which frees man from himself for the sake of others and in so doing brings man to a new individuality.<sup>22</sup> For Paul, in contrast to Luke, the extraordinary manifestations of the Spirit are not the most important reality. The most important reality is participating in a new life, a life of love, freedom, joy, and peace, made possible by an immanent Lord of the church through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In many respects the Johannine concept of Spirit is similar to the Pauline view in that both writers use much Hellenistic terminology to communicate the Jewish idea of the arrival of the possibility of life in the new age. John considers that the new age has arrived by God being present as Spirit. To live is to know the truth that God is present in a saving way in Jesus Christ. The work of the Spirit, then, is to guide men into this truth. Indeed, the Spirit is the Spirit of truth.<sup>23</sup> Within the pages of the Fourth Gospel we encounter a concept of Spirit which undoubtedly reflects the church's struggle with the docetic and animistic tendencies in Hellenistic thought. In this Gospel, the Spirit is identified with Christ and is not portrayed as an impersonal power. This is most

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<sup>22</sup>Schweizer, op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>23</sup>John 15:26.



evident in the incident of Jesus breathing on his disciples and saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit."<sup>24</sup> The Spirit is the Spirit of Life and the Spirit of Truth because it is the Spirit of Christ. Schweizer sums up the Johannine position: "For John, as for the whole Church, the Spirit could only be the power which makes it possible for man to recognize Jesus as Redeemer in whom he encounters God."<sup>25</sup>

In the Johannine account we no longer see the Spirit associated with sudden manifestations and ecstatic phenomena. This pattern holds true for the remainder of the New Testament as well. In fact, in these remaining books of the New Testament the concept of the Spirit as a life-giving power is rarely, if ever, mentioned. The general pattern in these books seems to be to give more emphasis to the Spirit in relation to institutional forms of church life and thought.

The pattern of development of thought concerning the concept of Spirit in the New Testament is not entirely unlike the development of the concept in the Old Testament. The pattern seems to move from the concept of Spirit as power to perform certain tasks to a more ethical concept associated with love and

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<sup>24</sup>John 20:22.

<sup>25</sup>Schweizer, op. cit., p. 97.

righteousness. From there the reality of Spirit in experience becomes diminished, giving way to more institutional forms. Also, in both the Old and New Testament patterns, the Spirit is never considered as a part of natural creation; it is always considered as coming as a gift from outside the natural potential of the created order. In spite of various emphases and modulations of theme, both Testaments also consider the Spirit of God to possess the characteristics of potency and intimacy.

## II. THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

Both the Lukan and Pauline accounts of early Christian history and tradition witness to the fact that the earliest Christian community understood itself to be formed and sustained by the presence of the living Lord who is the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Spirit was interpreted as the risen Christ carrying on his mission of healing and reconciliation. This was no vague doctrine, but rather the primitive church's interpretation of a new-found sense of power, courage, freedom, and joy, initiated at Pentecost. Leitzmann aptly indicates the probable atmosphere of such a Christian gathering:

When gathered together . . . they broke bread and became conscious of his presence. They were expectant of the coming of the Lord. They were held together in this way . . . all members shared the experience of the presence of the risen Lord.<sup>26</sup>

As has already been stated, the exigencies of time and history caused the spontaneous nature of early Christian worship and organization to give way to more ordered and institutional forms. As the importance of prophecy declined, the importance of preaching increased. The custom of receiving the Spirit with the laying on of hands came to be associated with receiving the Spirit at baptism and ordination. With the growing institutional solidification, spontaneous and ecstatic expressions of behavior became more and more unusual and unacceptable. The church wanted unity and a united witness in the midst of a cultural matrix full of competing religions and hostile elements. When a yearning to return to the former spontaneous power was expressed in the second century Montanist movement, the church rejected it in the interest of keeping the necessary order and unity. Perhaps it can be said that the church had to censure some of her most righteous people to remain an inclusive and forgiving community.

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<sup>26</sup>Hans Leitzmann, The Beginnings of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), pp. 63-64.

Within the context of the church's push for unity and survival, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit received little attention. In fact, from the close of the New Testament through much of the fourth century, the concept of the Holy Spirit was rarely dealt with in theological circles.<sup>27</sup> In spite of the fact that Christology was a major issue during this period, the Spirit was mentioned in two passages of scripture which came to be used in doctrinal formulations. These two passages were the Great Commission<sup>28</sup> and the Great Benediction.<sup>29</sup> The most complete doctrinal statement concerning the nature and work of the Holy Spirit was made at Constantinople in 381 A. D. with this affirmation: "The Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Life-giver which proceedeth from the Father, which with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified which spoke through the prophets."<sup>30</sup> This statement indicating the church's reaction to a heretical movement was conspicuous not only by the absence of reference to anything presently happening in the church at that time, but also for lack of reference in relating the Spirit to Christ.

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<sup>27</sup> Van Dusen, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>28</sup> Matthew 28:19.

<sup>29</sup> II Corinthians 13:14.

<sup>30</sup> Van Dusen, op. cit., p. 76.

If the Church went considerably beyond the New Testament in defining the doctrine of the person of Christ, it fell considerably short of the New Testament in defining the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.<sup>31</sup>

This need for relating the Spirit to the Son was most strongly felt in the Western Church with its more objective and less mystical inclination. In 1054 A.D. the Western Church decided to add the filioque clause to the creed adding, "and to the Son" after the words, "who proceeds from the Father."<sup>32</sup> This act completed the fracture between the Eastern and Western Church, a fracture that had been in the process of breaking over a period of time.

In addition to the Christocentric perspective concerning the Holy Spirit, there were two other assumptions related to pneumatology in the developing Western Church. The first assumption was that while dynamic and ecstatic expressions of the Holy Spirit were useful for the expanding primitive church, they no longer had place or function in the on-going established institution. Augustine, in his Epistle of St. John affirms, "that thing was done for a betokening and it passed away."<sup>33</sup> This general assumption not

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<sup>31</sup> George S. Hendry, The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), p. 37.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>33</sup> Morton T. Kelsey, Tongue Speaking (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1964), p. 23

only continued in the Catholic Church, but also carried over into Reformation thought.<sup>34</sup> From this perspective, religious behavior involving ecstasy was often diagnosed as an illness or even demonic possession. A second underlying assumption in the Western Church was that the Holy Spirit is necessarily and inextricably connected to the authority and sacraments of the church.<sup>35</sup> In this Catholic view the Spirit was considered the power which gave life to the church. This assumption was radically challenged by the Reformers.

Along with the Reformers' views of the authority of the Word over the authority of the church came a new emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit. The Reformers affirmed the Holy Spirit to be the power of God working faith in the individual believer's heart. It was considered to be the power which makes the words of the Bible witness to the saving Word of God which is Jesus Christ. The Spirit comes alive through the preached word. As has been mentioned, this emphasis on the Holy Spirit opened the road to a new religious individualism sometimes expressed in the

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<sup>34</sup> Hugh T. Kerr (ed.), A Compend of Luther's Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1943), p. 68.

<sup>35</sup> Hendrikus Berkhof, The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit (London: Epworth Press, 1965), p. 44.

Montanist-like behavior of groups like the Anabaptists and Schwenkfelders. Luther saw this emphasis on extreme individualistic inspiration to be divisive and dangerous. At times it appeared to be contrary to the Bible. He, therefore, found it necessary to emphasize the norm of the "outer word" over the individualistic inspiration fomented by the "inner word."<sup>36</sup> As has been mentioned, this resulted in the conservative Protestant emphasis of tying the work of the Holy Spirit to the inspiration and authority of the Bible.

After the Lutheran rejection and suppression of the Anabaptists and related movements, left-wing sectarianism ceased to have much influence in the mainstream of German religious life. On the other hand, in both England and America, the spiritual descendants of Reformation sectarianism did much to shape and temper society.<sup>37</sup> The new shape of Christianity was linked to a new emphasis and understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit.

John Wesley, one of the leaders of the Evangelical Revival, was responsible for a number of new emphases concerning the

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<sup>36</sup> Roland H. Bainton, Studies on the Reformation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 124.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

work of the Holy Spirit. Wesley's emphasis on an individual's experience of the transforming power and presence of God came to be a widespread reality during this eighteenth century revival. No longer was the Spirit to be limited to the institution and sacraments of the church. Neither was it seen as the inspirer of the Bible only. Rather, Wesley and his followers affirmed the Spirit to be a power which transformed man's life by increasing his love for God and the neighbor. Furthermore, Wesley insisted that the work of the Spirit, issuing in the fruits of righteousness and assurance, could be empirically tested and verified. Wesley's concept of the Holy Spirit could be virtually equated with his idea of grace. He viewed all acts of God's graciousness toward man as the work of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Spirit in Wesleyan thought is to be related to the whole developmental process of salvation, a process involving prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace. In the context of prevenient grace, the Spirit makes man aware of his sin and opens his heart to God. Through justifying grace the Spirit makes man aware that forgiveness is available for him. The Spirit operates in sanctifying grace by leading the Christian on to a life of increased love to God and man. In the Wesleyan concept of developmental salvation the Holy Spirit basically functions as the empowering presence of God necessary for



Christian growth and maturity.

The outgrowth of the pneumatology of the radical Protestant movement has tended to split in two directions, one liberal, one orthodox. In liberal thought Spirit came to be associated with the mind and its philosophical, religious, and ethical ideals. This found expression in German Idealism. In the orthodox tradition, which eventuated in off-shoots of evangelicalism, the emphasis was on the divine Spirit as the converting and regenerating power of the natural human spirit. "In spite of these deep contrasts, however, both groups stand on a common ground, because they see the Spirit mainly as a relation between God and the individual soul."<sup>38</sup>

As we survey Christian thought from the first to the twentieth century, we see three distinct yet interrelated emphases concerning the nature and work of the Holy Spirit. In the Catholic tradition the emphasis has been on the work of the Spirit as the power of the church. In the Reformed Protestant tradition the emphasis has been to see the Spirit as the meaning-bearing power of the Word, meaning God's saving Word in Jesus Christ. In conservative Protestant circles this emphasis has shifted to relating

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<sup>38</sup>Berkhof, op. cit., p. 46.

the work of the Spirit to the inspiration of the Bible. The third emphasis is to be found in the radical Protestant tradition including both liberal and orthodox wings. Here the Spirit is affirmed to be the power of God acting upon the individual. These three emphases witness to the fact that throughout her history the church has been continually faced with the problem of keeping freedom and form in creative tension. Unrestricted ecstatic religious behavior, such as that manifested by the Montanists and Anabaptists, has had to be adjudicated and evaluated by its fidelity to the saving Word manifested in Jesus Christ and by its constructive contribution to the up-building, unity, and on-going witness of the church. On the other hand, our survey indicates that these and other criteria have often been used in such a way as to perpetuate the status quo and thus shield the church from new bursts of creativity of the Holy Spirit. This persistent tension between freedom and form illustrates the fact that any adequate pneumatology must be structured with a cognizance and consciousness of the entire historical perspective of thought and response concerning the concept of the Holy Spirit. It is precisely this historical perspective which enables us to compare and contrast the Christian concept of the Holy Spirit to the concept of vital force in African dynamism.

### III. THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND AFRICAN DYNAMISM

In attempting to relate the historical perspective of the Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit to African dynamism, it is necessary to begin with a consideration of the relation of Spirit to God and nature. In the Old Testament and Christian views, Spirit is an activity and function of God. In no sense is Spirit a natural or assumed part of the created order; it is always thought of as a gift. The Pauline passages regarding human spirit and the Genesis passages regarding the Spirit and creation tend to be interpreted by biblical scholars as meaning that Spirit is the action of a gracious transcendent God.

In African dynamism the emphasis is on vital force, an impersonal power, immanent in and intrinsic to all of life.

"Africans are . . . 'dynamists' in the sense that they recognize a 'mana', an universal force animating all the being of the universe."<sup>39</sup> In our study of three African tribes we noted that the increase of vital force was the dominating motif in African religious behavior, often to the exclusion of the transcendent tribal creator god who is often pragmatically irrelevant to African

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<sup>39</sup>Placide Tempels, Bantu Philosophy (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1959), p. 114.

religious life. Most tribes undoubtedly think that vital force was created by the creator god. However, they also think the continual effectiveness of this force is more dependent on how it is approached and handled through religious and social behavior than in any relation to the primal creator god. The general trend in African dynamism is to consider vital force an intrinsic and integral part of the created order. The Judeo-Christian tradition, on the other hand, has tended to consider the Spirit of God as something distinct, belonging to another realm.

Another area which merits consideration concerning the relation of the Holy Spirit to African dynamism is the relation of the Spirit to community. A number of scholars like Schweizer, Berkhof, and Boer, have indicated that the Holy Spirit is experienced as an empowering agent in and through the community of faith for the purpose of that community's mission to the world. Such a theme is most evident in the early Christian church in which fellowship and unity were the foundation of the experience of the Holy Spirit. In a sense, this same point of view can be seen in the Catholic tradition which emphasizes that the Spirit operates in and through the institution and sacraments of the church. This same connection between the gathered community and the experience of vitality can be seen in Wesley's class meetings and the

revival tradition which he represented.

In our discussion of expressive religious behavior in African dynamism, we noted that the experience of vital force was most often real at those times in which the tribes were drawn together in unity. In the case of the Tonga, vitality was experienced during the tribal mhamba. The Lovedu found vitality through ritual and ceremonial acts requesting rain. The Dinka experienced vitality and unity at the sacrificial killing of cattle and at the burial of the masters of the fishing spear. Although, in both the Christian faith and African dynamism, vitality is experienced in and through community, the church's experience of vitality is ideally intended for the purpose of her self-sacrificing mission to the world. On the other hand, the experience of vitality in African dynamism is most often associated with tribal unity and survival.

Another area that needs exploration is the relation of the Spirit to the individual. Although the early prophet movement in Israel emphasized the importance of episodes in which the Spirit seized and sometimes replaced the individual ego, the dominant sentiment of the Christian tradition has been against the value and desirability of such experiences and expression. The Christian faith has been prone to emphasize the Pauline concept of the divine Spirit becoming immanent to the human spirit. This tradition has

emphasized that, instead of the individual losing his identity, he can be transformed and given a new and true identity by the power of the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, our study of three African tribes tends to indicate that African dynamism has the proclivity to define the effectiveness of vital force in terms of expressions of potency. We noted that the cult of spirit possession is often associated with ecstatic and trance-like behavior to such an extent that the participants often lose a sense of the individual and volitional center in an attempt to experience power to its fullest.

Another distinction between the Holy Spirit and the vital force concept in African dynamism is in the area of the relation of the Spirit to ethical behavior. Although the early ecstatic prophets of Israel conceived of Spirit without ethical connotations, the general emphasis and conviction of the post-eighth-century prophets of Judaism and the exponents of the Christian faith is that the presence and power of the Spirit must be related to justice and love. Paul's attempt to relate life in the Spirit to live is the prime example of such an emphasis. It can also be said that the Christocentric emphasis in Western pneumatology is not only an attempt to make the Holy Spirit personal, but is also an attempt to set some norm of righteousness for the various interpretations

and expressions related to the Holy Spirit.

In African dynamism no such comprehensive and inclusive ethical emphasis exists in relation to the vital force concept. The goal in traditional African religion is to possess the greatest vital force; "the worst misfortune and, in very truth, the only misfortune, is . . . the diminuation of this power."<sup>40</sup> To be sure, the increase of vital force is often connected to observance of tribal custom and law affecting one's ethical relations with his kin. Such action, however, hardly manifests the comprehensive ethical vision of biblical perspective associated with the views of the later prophets and the Apostle Paul. It can be said that while vital force is often associated with healing and blessing for the individual and his tribe, it is never conceived of as a power with moral connotations which can heal the wounds of social injustice.

We end this chapter by attempting to answer the question with which we began: What are the distinctive elements in the Christian concept of the Holy Spirit in contrast to the concept of vital force in African dynamism? The first such distinction is that Christians affirm that the Holy Spirit is always associated with God being personally present and acting. Vital force has no

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<sup>40</sup>Tempels, op. cit., p. 32.

such relation to the tribal creator god. A second distinction is that the Holy Spirit, experienced in and through community, is given, ideally at least, to empower the church in her self-giving mission to the world. Vital force operates in such a way as to insure tribal preservation and unity. A third difference is that the Holy Spirit manifests itself in such a way as to create a new individuality and never displaces the ego or centered self. The experience of vital force often involves such ego displacement. A fourth distinctive element is that the Holy Spirit is always related to love and justice in the comprehensive and inclusive sense of the word, extending beyond tribal and national barriers. Vital force has no such ethical connotation or comprehensiveness. These four distinctions should go a long way toward evaluating the various manifestations of vital force in African expressive behavior.

The task now facing us is one of relating the distinctive Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit to the positive and creative aspects of African thought and religious behavior. It is hoped that such an attempt can provide the foundation and matrix for the growth and maturation of a truly African church. Such a task necessarily involves a discussion of the Holy Spirit from a contemporary perspective.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE

A certain hiatus between the Christian faith and African dynamism is both inevitable and necessary. By definition and operation the Holy Spirit is not identical to the concept of vital force. Nevertheless, it is also true that Christian doctrine has a way of becoming ossified and uncreative when it becomes conditioned by acculturation. This is a way of saying that the existing gap may be unnecessarily wide between the concept of vital force and the Western Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Much Western thought concerning the Holy Spirit was formulated at a time in which theology was influenced by a view of reality which was static and unchanging, divided into the realms of temporal and eternal, mortal and immortal. Since both contemporary cosmology and depth psychology suggest that reality is more unified, dynamic, and creative than the view which influenced traditional pneumatological thought, the Western concept of the Holy Spirit needs to be reconsidered from a contemporary perspective.

Furthermore, such a consideration of pneumatology from a contemporary perspective is necessary because the Western missionary finds himself conditioned by a theology in which the

role of the Holy Spirit is both limited and vague. The dominant theological mode of the twentieth century has been interest in "a new emphasis to Christology, largely at the cost of the interest in the working of the Spirit here and now."<sup>1</sup> In this perspective, the work of the Holy Spirit is largely subsumed under and subordinated to the work of Christ. Such a perspective hardly makes for a narrowing of the existing gap between the Christian faith and African dynamism. In addition to this, Western theology is facing a crisis in belief regarding the meaning and relevance of symbols having to do with the supernatural. In this perspective, the Holy Spirit is often seen as a presently useless symbol of an outdated and irrelevant cosmology. Such a perspective hardly conditions the Westerner to think positively about either the Holy Spirit or African dynamism.

In re-thinking existing presuppositions about the Holy Spirit and African dynamism, it is necessary to consider a number of different contemporary insights germane to a dynamic understanding of reality. Such relevant insights are evident in the theology of Paul Tillich and in the depth psychology of Carl Jung.

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<sup>1</sup> Hendrikus Berkhof, The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit (London: Epworth Press, 1965), p. 11.

## I. PAUL TILLICH AND SPIRITUAL PRESENCE

In contrast to the dominant motif of most Western theology in which the doctrine of the Holy Spirit plays a tangential and subordinate part, the theology of Paul Tillich is something of an exception. In his thought the concept of the Spirit or Spiritual Presence plays an essential and vital role. Aware of the lack of creative pneumatology in the West, Tillich boldly admits that his theology inclines "more to inwardness and experience."<sup>2</sup> This identification with radical Protestantism is seen in various statements which express sympathy and support for Spirit-movements against the continued assault of ecclesiastical criticism.<sup>3</sup>

Tillich develops his concept of the Holy Spirit or Spiritual Presence within the context of his system of correlation, a system which attempts to provide theological answers to the questions implied in human existence.<sup>4</sup> By beginning with the questions in human existence rather than with objective and dogmatic

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<sup>2</sup>Paul Tillich, 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951-63), III, 118.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., I, 64.

theological statements, Tillich opens new areas for pneumatological exploration. Following the system of correlation, Tillich deals with questions concerning the meaning and function of spirit in life. In one sense Tillich describes spirit as the animating power of life.<sup>5</sup> In light of his universal concept of life, spirit would also be a part of the inorganic.<sup>6</sup> In a more specific sense, however, Tillich uses the term, dimension of spirit, to refer to the "personal-communal" which, though potentially present in all other dimensions, has happened only in man.<sup>7</sup> "The dimension of spirit includes those cognitive and moral functions of life in which the personal center sees itself in relation to the world and acts upon its world."<sup>8</sup> Life, which consists of the functions of self-integration, self-creation, and self-transcendence, expresses itself in morality, culture, and religion in the dimension of spirit. In the context of Tillich's system, an awareness of the dimension of spirit is necessary because "without knowing what spirit is, one cannot know what Spirit is."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., III, 21.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., III, 12.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., III, 21.

<sup>8</sup>Alexander J. McKelway, The Systematic Theology of Paul Tillich (New York: Dell, 1964), p. 192.

<sup>9</sup>Tillich, Systematic Theology, III, 22

In the dimension of spirit man becomes aware of the ambiguous nature of life which is a mixture of essential and existential elements. He also becomes especially aware of the ambiguous tension between potentiality and estrangement in the functions of morality, culture, and religion. Spiritual Presence is the theological answer to the existential questions asked in relation to these ambiguities. The ambiguities implicit in the subject-object division of life are fragmentarily overcome with the two givens of Spiritual Presence in ecstatic experience, the givens of faith and love, "Faith is the state of being grasped by the transcendent unity of unambiguous life . . . it embodies love as the state of being taken into that transcendent unity."<sup>10</sup> In essence, Spiritual Presence overcomes the ambiguities of the dimension of spirit by creating a theonomy which is "a law or principle that fulfills the law of ones own being by uniting it with the ground and source of all being."<sup>11</sup>

In structuring his pneumatology in this way, Tillich suggests some creative insights to pneumatological problems. In the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., III, 129.

<sup>11</sup> Van A. Harvey, A Handbook of Theological Terms (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p. 118.

first place, he ties the realm of the Spirit much more closely to nature and the human spirit than does the traditional historical perspective. Says Tillich, "The divine life participates in every life as its ground and aim."<sup>12</sup> If the Holy is to be experienced, it is to be experienced in the finite.<sup>13</sup> This is why myth and symbol are valuable; they are potential bearers of Spiritual Presence. In Tillichian thought, Spirit is not considered to be a part of a separate and supranatural realm; it is, rather, a symbol for that healing power present in all of life, the power which overcomes the ambiguities of life. Spirit is not a separate reality or being, but rather the ground of being immanent and active. Quite obviously, such a concept of Spiritual Presence is not limited within the confines of the Christian faith. It should also be said that Tillich's view of the Spirit in relation to nature is essentially creative and non-mechanistic. It is, therefore, much more in keeping with the theories of indeterminacy and relativity than are most Western pneumatologies.

This leads to a second Tillichian pneumatological emphasis

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<sup>12</sup> Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 245.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Tillich, The Future of Religions (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 86.

regarding the Spirit and Christ. Even before the insertion of the filioque clause in the creed, Western theology has tended to confine and tie the work of the Spirit to Christ. This was a way of giving personal and ethical connotations to the work and activity of the Holy Spirit, thereby distinguishing it from other expressions of vitality. Tillich, however, recognizes the danger of this tendency, a danger which often ossifies the creative power of the Spirit in dogmatic and creedal assertions about Christ. Tillich terms this predominant tendency in Protestant theology, Christocentric unitarianism, a tendency which "prevented an understanding of the Spiritual Presence and the ecstatic character of faith, love, and prayer."<sup>14</sup> This, again, reflects Tillich's theological proclivity to inwardness and experience. Nevertheless, Tillich does assert that Christ is the criterion by which to evaluate Spiritual Presence. The relation of Christ to the Spirit is that of final revelation which means, "the decisive, fulfilling, unsurpassable, that which is the criterion of all others."<sup>15</sup> Such a criterion carries with it several implications. In the first place, the ecstatic nature of Spiritual Presence can never destroy the rational

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<sup>14</sup>Tillich, Systematic Theology, III, 291.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., III, 133.

structure or the centeredness of the individual self.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, an authentic manifestation of Spiritual Presence must be related to transformation and creativity.<sup>17</sup> In addition, Spiritual Presence is to be related to ultimate concern, to love and justice.<sup>18</sup>

Another relevant and somewhat unique Tillichian emphasis is on the necessary relation of ecstasy to Spiritual Presence. Here the word ecstasy means the self-transcendence which leads to maturity and fulfillment, and not the frenzied losing of ones self in a river of emotion. Through ecstatic experience Spiritual Presence becomes immanent to the human spirit, driving it beyond itself and grasping it with unambiguous faith and love, and yet never replacing or destroying the centered self.<sup>19</sup> Thought of in this way, ecstasy is more apt to involve the sublime emotions associated with a sense of grace and joy, rather than with the erratic emotions associated with chaos and disorder. With this concept of ecstasy and Spiritual Presence, Tillich comes very close to the Pauline concept of life in the Spirit.

With his concept of Spiritual Presence, Tillich opens up

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., III, 112.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., III, 120.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., III, 144.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., III, 112.



significant areas for reconsideration as far as pneumatology is concerned. With his emphasis on the integral relation of Spirit to life, Tillich challenges the traditional concept of Spirit being a separate reality from another realm. This universal concept of Spirit challenges us to be sensitive to the work and manifestations of Spiritual Presence not only in religions outside the confines of the Christian faith, but in the very process of creation itself. Also, with his refusal to confine and tie Spiritual Presence to dogmatic and creedal statements about Christ, Tillich opens for reconsideration an area of thought that has long been an assumed part of Western pneumatology. And finally, with his appreciation of and emphasis on ecstasy defined as self-transcendence, Tillich provides us with a basis for reconsidering the value of ecstasy in religious behavior. Tillich, indeed, offers contemporary pneumatological insights which merit consideration.

## II. CARL JUNG AND THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS

Any contemporary perspective of the nature and work of the Holy Spirit should include a discussion of the concept of the collective unconscious found in the depth psychology of Carl Jung. In Jungian thought, the collective unconscious is the seat of creativity and potential which can lead to integration and wholeness.

The theologian and student of Jungian psychology, Lindsay Dewar, has this to say of the collective unconscious:

Beneath the level of the fully conscious behavior . . . there lie deep springs of action . . . It is fair to claim that these so-called springs of action are simply another name for the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>20</sup>

Just how did Jung conceive of this life-giving aspect of the unconscious and what relation does it have to the Christian concept of the Holy Spirit?

Early in his career as a psychotherapist, Jung was "constantly presented by his patients with symbols which comparative religion showed to be universal symbols among mankind for creative and undifferentiated divinity."<sup>21</sup> Jung's insistence that the creative and the divine can and should work through the depths of the unconscious into the conscious life not only widened the hiatus between himself and Freud, but at the same time proved to be one of his major contributions to the psychotherapeutic movement.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Lindsay Dewar, The Holy Spirit and Modern Thought (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 188.

<sup>21</sup> Victor White, God and the Unconscious (New York: World, 1952), p. 72.

<sup>22</sup> Frieda Fordham, An Introduction to Jung's Psychology (Baltimore: Penguin, 1966), p. 88.

This made Jung more interested in what man could and should become, rather than in what he had been. In other words, Jung basically saw man as one more driven toward spiritual fulfillment and meaning rather than as one driven by the irrational and sinister forces of the unconscious.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, it stimulated his interest in studying the nature and function of that part of the unconscious which is the "inherited possibility of psychical function in general which all men had in common, the collective unconscious."<sup>24</sup> The collective unconscious, is the area in which Jung found the "germs of new possibilities of life."<sup>25</sup> Jung's clarion call, expressed both implicitly and explicitly, is for mankind to become aware of this creative depth. Jung considers this depth a part of psychic reality with which modern man needs to come to terms.<sup>26</sup> He makes it even more

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<sup>23</sup> White, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>24</sup> Jolan Jacobi, The Psychology of Jung (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Fordham, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>26</sup> Carl G. Jung, Modern Man in Search of a Soul (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1933), p. 191.

explicit when he says: "We moderns are faced with the necessity of rediscovering the life of the spirit, we must experience it anew for ourselves."<sup>27</sup> As we consider this relation of the spirit to the creative depth, several things need to be mentioned. The first is that Jung is careful not to place boundaries on the collective unconscious even though it is in some aspects inherited. This leaves open the possibility for life in the spirit to be something other than either a projection or an individualistic narcissism. It means, indeed, that we can relate to a reality that can best be described in Tillichian terms as, the ground of being, something which is both immanent and transcendent. Certainly genuine life in the Spirit must have these two qualities. Outler's comment is germane at this point: "The Holy Spirit is never a whit less transcendent when most fully immanent."<sup>28</sup>

As has been stated, the uniqueness of Jung's system stems from his concept of the desirability of the creative elements of the unconscious eventuating in integration of the personality. In describing the dynamic of the Jungian perspective, Jacobi says:

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>28</sup> Albert Outler, "Veni Creator Spiritus, The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," Perkins School of Theology Journal, XIX, 3 (Spring 1966), 34.

Wholeness of the personality is attained when the pairs of opposites are differentiated, when the two parts of the total psyche, the conscious and the unconscious stand in a living relation to one another.<sup>29</sup>

The important thing to note is that disease and disturbance is caused by disharmony. Healing and wholeness then, come from harmony, integration, and complementation of the basic aspects of the conscious and the unconscious. In other words, wholeness is not merely homeostasis, but rather a matter of a kind of a rebirth into an integrated personality. The germs of this rebirth lie within the collective unconscious. "When man begins to listen to the voice of the unconscious and understand the power that works through him . . . then he is on the way to a genuine development of the personality."<sup>30</sup> The Jungian, Ira Progoff, would say that this process begins by "entering areas of awareness and perceiving dimensions of meaning that had not been opened before."<sup>31</sup>

This leads us into the significance of dreams and symbols and their relation to archetypes. Jung uses the word, archetype,

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<sup>29</sup> Jacobi, op. cit., p. 100.

<sup>30</sup> Fordham, op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>31</sup> Ira Progoff, The Symbolic and the Real (New York: Julian Press, 1963), p. 110.

to describe the "images impressed upon the collective unconscious from old."<sup>32</sup> They are not basically inherited ideas, but rather inherited dispositions to reaction.<sup>33</sup> Basically, archetypes form the center and fields of force of the collective unconscious. Experience of these fields of force can be seen in such archetypal images as The Wise Old Man, The Great Mother, and The Tree of Life. Jung's experience of these and other archetypal symbols in himself and in his patients led him to conclude that man was, indeed, seeking wholeness. In the same way, dreams and myth are of value because they tell us of the dimension that is seeking to be integrated and provide us with an opportunity for growth. Progoff couches it this way: "The capacity to participate in reality through symbols can remake his existence because it liberates tremendous amounts of spiritual energy at the depth of the person."<sup>34</sup> Jung, however, reminds us that this is not an easy way. The difficult road to healing or re-integration is called the way of individuation. This is often a traumatic process of coming to

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<sup>32</sup> Carl G. Jung, The Integration of the Personality (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1944), p. 53.

<sup>33</sup> Jacobi, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>34</sup> Progoff, op. cit., p. 216.

terms with the archetypal images at various stages of the unconscious, beginning with the archetype of the Anima and, hopefully, arriving at the image of the Self which is the God-given potential in man.

The point that needs to be mentioned here and elaborated in another context is that Jung was clear that too much unconscious energy can be dangerous, just as quenching the unconscious can be life-stifling. If consciousness is not firmly enough built, and if no strong core of personality is present and strong enough to deal creatively with unconscious contents, then large portions of consciousness can be flooded and even swallowed up by the activated and inflated unconscious thus opening the way for psychosis.<sup>35</sup>

As we have seen, Jung, more than most psychologists, gives us significant conceptual tools with which to deal with the mystical, the paranormal, and the ritualistic elements of religion, especially as they are related to the healing work of the Holy Spirit. Jung's central thesis is that health, maturity, and freedom are dependent on the emergence of a new reality from the collective unconscious which somehow eventuates in a complementary relation of the antagonistic elements of the individual

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<sup>35</sup> Jacobi, op. cit., p. 89.

personality. In other words, Jung suggests that the dynamic is to be encouraged.

One of the ways Jungians seem to have of encouraging the dynamic is by emphasizing that the contents of dreams and imagination have a positive value in growth, if they are accepted and encouraged. This can undoubtedly have interesting implications for those who are interested in relating the work of the Holy Spirit to the human personality and its growth. A more traditional way of encouraging the dynamic through imagination is to be found within the context and fellowship of worship which would, of course, include the use of symbol, myth, and ritual. This will be discussed in another context.

One phenomenon historically connected with the dynamic dimension of worship is glossolalia. Again and again, from the time of Montanism to the present, this phenomenon has been feared and condemned by ecclesiastical officials as divisive and demonic. Nevertheless, this phenomenon was not only an assumed part of early Christian worship, but is presently prevalent among indigenous church and sect movements in Africa and Latin America. Can this expression of ecstasy have any positive relationship to the collective unconscious and healing? Jung became interested in the glossolalia phenomenon both by observing patients



and through contact with Theodore Flornoy, a prominent psychologist, who associated glossolalia with sonambulism. A reference to glossolalia appears in Jung's dissertation. Here he suggests that ecstatic speech is associated with an expression of a multiple personality in which some center other than the ego possesses the motor centers of the personality. He also suggests that this is not in and of itself necessarily bad. In fact, it can have some teleological significance.<sup>36</sup> Later, in 1940, Jung wrote a paper entitled, Transformation Symbolism in the Mass. In this paper he describes how the invasion of the unconscious contents commonly occurs prior to integration of the personality.<sup>37</sup> In other words, from Jung's point of view, glossolalia can have a positive relation to the process of integration.

To even imply that Jung considered unfettered expression of the collective unconscious as creative and spiritual would be misleading and false. In fact, he makes it clear that too much unconsciousness, shadow or spiritual, at the wrong time can be demonic and disastrous.

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<sup>36</sup> Morton T. Kelsey, Tongue Speaking (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1964), p. 198.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

If the conscious is not firmly enough built or if no core of personality is present strong enough to take these unconscious contents and their projections, to comprehend and assimilate them, then it can be flooded and even swallowed up . . .<sup>38</sup>

Just as an overly strong ego can be a barrier to spiritual growth, so a weak ego can be a dangerous invitation for the demonic. In fact, Jung suggests that it might be dangerous for Occidental man to strive toward the goal of "letting the unconscious happen."<sup>39</sup> In light of this, it would seem possible to formulate from a Jungian perspective a concept of demonic possession without at the same time presupposing a Manichean cosmic dualism.

The questions concerning ecstasy and demonic possession at least suggest questions concerning such things as psychic phenomena and parapsychology. It should be said at this point that Tillich is quite explicit in saying that the existence or non-existence of psychic phenomena has nothing to do with Spiritual Presence.<sup>40</sup> Jung, however, did have an interest in such phenomena for he wrote his dissertation on the subject. In some respects Jung's concept of the collective unconscious is a possible way of conceptualizing occurrences in this category. This would be

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<sup>38</sup> Jacobi, op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 76-77.

<sup>40</sup> Tillich, Systematic Theology, III, 22.

especially true if we think of the collective unconscious as not entirely hemmed in by boundaries. We have already mentioned that Jung suggests this possibility even though he also suggests it as being inherited.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, Jung's concept of archetypes clearly involves us in some sort of common community in which all humanity participates. "Every human being is archaic man in his psyche."<sup>42</sup> Jung also hints how he would stand concerning the possibility of psychic phenomena in a letter written in 1948 when he says:

On empirical ground I am convinced that the soul is in part outside space and time. . . . Similarly, the continuation of personal consciousness after death appears to be on grounds of experience to be probable.<sup>43</sup>

Jung is most lucid and explicit concerning paranormal phenomena in his discussion of synchronicity. In this discussion we see how Jung fits the paranormal into his system in general.

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<sup>41</sup> Carl G. Jung, Psychology of Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), p. 272.

<sup>42</sup> Jung, Modern Man in Search of a Soul, p. 126.

<sup>43</sup> White, op. cit., p. 272.

Synchronicity, therefore, means the simultaneous occurrence of a certain psychic state with one or more external events which appear as meaningful parallel to the momentary subjective state . . . and, in certain cases, vice versa.<sup>44</sup>

In an explication of this concept, Jung says that synchronistic phenomena prove that "either the psyche cannot be localized in space or that space is relative to the psyche."<sup>45</sup> In a more specific and explicit statement concerning experiments being carried on in the field of psychic research, Jung says:

The Rhine experiments have demonstrated that space and time and hence causality are factors that can be eliminated, with the result that acausal phenomena otherwise called miracles, appear possible.<sup>46</sup>

The interesting point to note is that psychic phenomena are related to the collective unconscious, the source of healing, creativity, and integration.

We have already mentioned that Jung relates symbols and myth directly to the healing of the psychic process. "By bringing up symbols which are energy transformers we are capable of changing the direction of the psychic process again into a progressive one."<sup>47</sup> Basic to Jung's thought is the idea that the symbol

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<sup>44</sup> Carl G. Jung, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche (New York: Pantheon, 1960), 441.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 431. <sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 530. <sup>47</sup> Jacobi, op. cit., p. 55.

is produced in the unconscious which can attract psychic energy. Although the symbol is never thought out, it does come in the form of a revelation, intuition, or meaning.<sup>48</sup> The value of symbolism is that of attracting corresponding archetypal symbols which are directed toward creativity and integration. For Jung, symbolization is one of the most important functions of psychic life. It is not difficult to see why Jung is somewhat caustic toward symbol-starved Protestantism when he says:

The history of the development of Protestants is one of chronic iconoclasm. The alarming impoverishment of symbolism is not a part of our life. The power of the Church has gone with the loss of symbolism.<sup>49</sup>

Jung makes it quite clear that as far as the value of dogma and symbolism is concerned, he is much more Catholic than Protestant.<sup>50</sup> He is also clear that both myth and symbol can lead to richness of life and creativity.

The more critical reason dominates the more impoverished life becomes; but the more myth we are capable of making conscious the more life we integrate. Overvalued reason has this in common with political absolutism: under its dominion the individual is pauperized.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Fordham, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>49</sup> Jung, The Integration of the Personality, p. 61.

<sup>50</sup> Jung, Psychology and Religion, pp. 57-58.

<sup>51</sup> Carl G. Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections (New York: Pantheon, 1963), p. 302.

Jung's rather unique emphases on such things as the value of ecstasy, the reality of psychic phenomena, and the value of myth and symbol and their connection to the creative collective unconscious open new possibilities for relating the Holy Spirit to African dynamism.

### III. THE CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE AND AFRICAN DYNAMISM

The contemporary perspectives of Tillich and Jung not only throw light on traditional issues associated with pneumatology, their dynamic views of reality help move toward narrowing the gap between the Christian faith and African dynamism. For one thing, the dominant emphasis in the thought of both Tillich and Jung is on Spirit as the creative power in life which brings new meaning and actualizes potential. For Tillich, Spiritual Presence is a way of emphasizing the fact that the divine reality, the ground and aim of all life, is immanent and acting in the world. For Jung, the collective unconscious represents the dynamic and creative potential which can lead to integration and wholeness. In short, both Tillich and Jung consider Spirit to be integral to life itself, rather than a mysterious power or being from another realm. This view of the realm and work of the Spirit is much closer to the African view of

reality where no dichotomy exists between natural and supernatural; all is considered a part of a singular totality.<sup>52</sup> As was indicated in our study of three African tribes, the general African view is that to a greater or lesser extent vital force participates in all that is. Through their expressive behavior the Tonga, the Lovedu, and the Dinka witness to the fact that the world of the spiritual, the realm of vital force, is the world of real life experience. Needless to say, the traditional tendency of Western theology of separating the realm of the Spirit from the realm of life actually widens the hiatus between Western theology and African dynamism. The more theology separates the Holy Spirit from the life process, the more it is apt to be seen by the African as belonging to the irrelevant realm of the tribal creator gods.

By positioning the realm of Spirit within the midst of life, a further question is raised: the relation of Spirit to divine personality. In this respect, Jung does not seem to attach much personality to the creative collective unconscious except, of course, through association with archetypal figures. Tillich is a bit more ambiguous. While Spiritual Presence represents a life-giving

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<sup>52</sup> John V. Taylor, The Primal Vision (London: SCM Press, 1963), p. 72.

power, the very term, presence, implies the possibility of some personal attributes. Furthermore, Tillich's association of authentic manifestations of Spiritual Presence with the criterion of Christ, the final revelation, would imply that these manifestations are to be associated with personality. The basic thrust of both Tillich and Jung, however, is to describe and define Spirit in functional rather than ontological categories.

While Western theology with its Christological emphasis has often tended to subordinate and limit the work of the Spirit, some new insights of biblical theology suggest a more creative and functional possibility.

Here also, biblical theology has brought a renewal, which is the consequence of the discovery of the identity between Christ and the Spirit. This is not complete identity. Christ as the risen and exalted Lord, is the Spirit. . . . The Spirit is the new way of existence and action by Jesus Christ. Through his resurrection he becomes a person in action, continuing and making effective on a world-wide scale what he began in his earthly life.<sup>53</sup>

The interesting point to note here is that the emphasis is on function. The Holy Spirit is associated with Christ because it functions as Christ functions, giving new life, healing, actualizing potential. This functional emphasis regarding the Spirit is

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<sup>53</sup> Berkhof, op. cit., pp. 26-27.



essentially the thrust of both Tillich and Jung. As has been noted in our study of the Tonga, the Lovedu, and the Dinka tribes, the view of reality that is most meaningful is the pragmatic and functional view rather than the theoretical one. The concept of vital force has meaning in these societies because it is the functional, accessible power which gives rain, fertility, and health. This is a way of saying that with a functional concept of Christ and the Holy Spirit, a way would be provided to narrow the gap between Western theology and African dynamism, while, at the same time, providing a basis for distinguishing between the expressions of spirit in African culture.

Another emphasis common to both Jung and Tillich is on the importance of self-transcendence and growth. Tillich uses the word, ecstasy, to describe this experience. For Jung, this experience of the creative dynamic leading to alteration of the personality is associated with the process of individuation and integration. Both Tillich and Jung associate this process of transformation with the probe into the mystical dynamic depth of reality. This is why Tillich can say: "Spirit is ecstatic and so are contemplation, prayer and worship in general."<sup>54</sup> In Jungian thought,

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<sup>54</sup> Tillich, Systematic Theology, III, 192.

the way of individuation involves a movement into the creative depth of the collective unconscious, a process which encourages the dynamic. Sometimes the experience of the unconscious can involve ecstatic experience resulting in such things as glossolalia and extraordinary insight. While Jung would insist with Tillich that such experiences can be demonic leading to disintegration, he would also say that they can be creative and lead to integration of the personality.

Needless to say, in African culture where an individual gets his sense of identity from participation, the reality of ecstasy, experienced individually and collectively, plays no insignificant part. As was indicated in our study of three African tribes, the feeling of vitality or fullness of life, often associated with ecstasy, provides an African with his sense of strength and belonging. Unfortunately, the creative and destructive aspects of ecstasy are often not defined and distinguished in African culture. The result is that the centered self is often lost in such experiences. This seems to be the trend in the rapidly expanding cults of spirit possessions. As has been indicated, both Tillich and Jung would insist that ecstasy be judged in terms of whether or not it leads to creativity, love and justice. Nevertheless, it should also be said that they would also insist that it is a mistake

to categorically reject all ecstasy in religious behavior as has often been the tendency in Western ecclesiastical circles.

Another emphasis common to Tillich and Jung is on the positive value of myth and symbol. Tillich is quite explicit that these are the media through which Spiritual Presence manifests itself. This is undoubtedly why Tillich is concerned about Protestantism's de-emphasis of the sacramental basis of religion.<sup>55</sup> In the same vein, Jung feels that through myth and symbol one gets in touch with the creative depths of the collective unconscious. While Jung is critical of the Western tendency to over-rationalize and criticize the value of myth and symbol, Tillich is concerned that authentic symbols be used meaningfully. This is why he emphasizes the importance of the deliteralization of myth rather than outright demythologization.<sup>56</sup> For Tillich as for Jung, both myth and symbol can express elements of infinity and ultimate concern.<sup>57</sup>

As has been mentioned in our study of three African tribes, myth and symbol are important not only as a way of explaining the

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<sup>55</sup> Tillich, The Future of Religions, p. 8.

<sup>56</sup> Tillich, Systematic Theology, III, 142.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., I, 80.

otherwise inexplicable, but also as media for experiencing vitality through the ritual process. A good example of this is the Dinka association of the symbol of cattle with vitality. The anthropologist, A. F. C. Wallace, has this to say of the value of ritual communication which necessarily involves the use of myth and symbol:

Ritual may be defined as stereotyped communication, solitary or interpersonal, which reduces anxiety, prepares the organism to act, and, (in social rituals) co-ordinates the preparation for action among several organisms, and which does all this more quickly and reliably than can be accomplished (given the characteristics of the organism and circumstance) by non-stereotyped, informational communication.<sup>58</sup>

Our study has indicated that both Tillich and Jung would affirm the validity of Wallace's assertion, especially as it relates to the value of the ritual use of myth and symbol as media of change and action.

As has been indicated throughout this study, the tendency in African culture is to associate all extraordinary manifestations of power and insight with the work of spirit. Included in such extraordinary expressions would be manifestations in the category of psychic phenomena, including extrasensory perception, intuition, and sometimes alleged communication with those who have died. The important place such phenomena play in indigenous

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<sup>58</sup> A. F. C. Wallace, Religion: An Anthropological View (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 236.

Zionist sects indicates something of the pivotal role of such phenomena in African religious thought. While Tillich was quite explicit that such phenomena had nothing to do with Spiritual Presence,<sup>59</sup> Jung, on the other hand, not only showed interest in such occurrences, but set forth a possible explanation of the same with his concepts of the collective unconscious and synchronicity, thereby leaving the way open for associating these phenomena with integration and healing.

Western theology, conditioned by a static cosmological perspective, has tended to view such phenomena with a mixture of suspicion and agnosticism. Nevertheless, modern cosmology, with its dynamic view of reality, has made it necessary to reconsider the validity and value of such phenomena so prevalent in African and other cultures. No longer can we think of the universe being composed of simply located particles of matter functioning in time and space. Rather, "matter seems more like a sequence of events than an independent collection of substances."<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, space and time are to be derived from these events,

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<sup>59</sup> Tillich, Systematic Theology, III, 22.

<sup>60</sup> Ian G. Barbour, Issues in Science and Religion (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 297.

making space-time relative. "Objects in a state of motion relative to each other are utilizing, for their endurance meanings of space and time which are not identical from one object to another."<sup>61</sup>

In short, modern cosmology affirms the possibility of the interrelation of entities in different time-space relationships interpenetrating each other. Quite obviously, this obviates the old mind-matter dichotomy. While such a view of the universe does not prove the existence or non-existence of psychic phenomena, it does leave open the possibility. Needless to say, this is an area which requires further research and investigation.

In this contemporary perspective we have attempted to show how the insights of both Tillich and Jung can help in understanding how God is active as Holy Spirit in the world, active in the midst of life as the creative power which gives life. We have also attempted to show the relevance of such a concept of the Holy Spirit for African dynamism. A most apt statement has been made by Albert Outler concerning the nature and work of the Holy Spirit, a statement which summarizes and takes into consideration different aspects of both historical and contemporary pneumatological insights:

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<sup>61</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, Science and the Modern World (New York: Mentor, 1964), p. 112.

The power to be human is the power to be spiritual and vice versa. And the energy for either is from the Holy Spirit who is God at work in us actualizing the possibilities he has already created for us. The way to holiness--to the wholeness of God's design for us--is life in the Spirit which is neither mystical nor magical but life of love in and for the human creation which is the Holy Spirit's special domain. Life in the Spirit is as worldly as being human is being worldly.<sup>62</sup>

The task remaining before us is to weave the implications of such a concept of the Holy Spirit into a relevant and viable missionary strategy for Africa.

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<sup>62</sup>Outler, op. cit., p. 39.

## CHAPTER V

### TOWARD AN AFRICAN CHURCH: A STRATEGY

In the preceding chapters an attempt has been made to show how an understanding and appreciation of the concept of the Holy Spirit can not only provide the most adequate basis for evaluating the various expressions of vital force in African culture, but also can help in narrowing the existing gap between the Christian faith and the African dynamic world-view. We attempted to make this analysis specific by summarizing at the end of each of the two preceding chapters how the Holy Spirit could be related to African dynamism from the historical and contemporary perspectives respectively. The purpose of such an analysis has been to see in perspective the relevant trends and insights which might be helpful in developing a strategy for the growth and maturation of a truly African church. The development of such a church is essential if Christianity expects to become deeply rooted in African life. One thing is certain: the Western-influenced patterns in African church life are no longer acceptable or relevant without adaptation and, in most cases, radical transformation. While it is true that many older African church leaders are reluctant about giving up Western-influenced traditions and customs, it is equally



true that many other African Christians, in search of a true African identity, are not content to follow the patterns of the overseas church. It can be predicted that this discontent will augment rather than diminish.

Africans deviating from time-honored customs of the Western Churches are at the same time accused of being syncretistic and heretical. Self respecting African Christians are more inclined to choose the latter in order to be Christian Africans.<sup>1</sup>

What changes should be made in missionary approaches and attitudes in order to encourage and assist Christian Africans in the development of a church? The entire thrust of this dissertation has been an attempt to indicate directions and possibilities. What is now needed are some specific suggestions and proposals regarding missionary strategy in contemporary Africa.

The first such proposal is that missions, and Protestant missions in particular, should develop a new appreciation for and place more emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in the communal aspects of religious life. Many Protestant missionaries come from evangelical and pietistic backgrounds in which the emphasis has been on individual decision and responsibility.

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<sup>1</sup> Daisuke Kitagawa, "The Crisis in African Christianity," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, XIX: 4, Part 1 (May 1964), 332.

Consequently, missionary strategy in the past has often been oriented to converting and nurturing individuals while taking little cognizance of the importance of the social dimension of man. The preceding chapters have indicated the close association between the work of the Holy Spirit and the communal aspects of Christianity. The Spirit is most often experienced in and through Christian community to enable that community to give itself in love to the world. In this context the community has the responsibility to order, use, and adjudicate the various manifestations of Spirit that occur in its midst. As has been indicated, such an emphasis on the Holy Spirit and community world would be most amenable to the African view of reality in which vital force is most often experienced and expressed in and through community. Taylor specifically indicates the importance of community to the African identity:

Any attempt to look upon the world through African eyes must involve this adventure of imagination whereby we abandon our image of a man whose complex identity is encased within the shell of his physical being, and allow ourselves instead to visualize a centrifugal selfhood, equally complex, interpermeating other selves in a relationship in which subject and object are no longer distinguishable. "I think, therefore I am, is replaced by, "I participate, therefore I am."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> John V. Taylor, The Primal Vision (London: SCM Press, 1963), p. 50.

In the midst of changing African culture, this would mean that more emphasis should be placed on the church and congregation as a healing, nurturing habitation in which individuals not only find a sense of identity, but also a sense of unity. This emphasis on the communal, on the church as a nurturing habitation, could have some rather specific implications for Africa. It would mean that more emphasis should be placed on the development and creative use of small groups, groups in which one becomes aware of and affirms his individuality through participation, groups which have a certain sense of mission and are free to fulfill that mission accordingly. Nevertheless, in keeping with African tradition, these small groups should also have a sense of belonging to a larger whole. For this reason, occasional large group meetings should be provided for and encouraged, not so much to transact business, but rather as an opportunity to affirm unity. In a recent analysis describing the phenomenal growth of "tribal" churches, this reason was given:

The main one is their intense personal fellowship which shows its members relevance of Christian concern for each other, the practical meaning of love in the congregation in terms of trust and dependence on each other.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>The Star [Johannesburg, South Africa], May 29, 1968, p. 13.

This emphasis on the importance of the communal as a matrix in which the Holy Spirit can operate is absolutely essential to the development of an African church.

A second related proposal is that the missionary effort in Africa should appreciate and develop ways of using myth, symbol, and ritual in worship. Here again, the suggestion applies more to non-sacramental Protestant missions. We noted that both Jung and Tillich provide a conceptual basis for affirming that ritual, myth, and symbol can often be media by which an individual or a group becomes aware of the creative power of the Spirit. We also noted in Chapter II the importance of ritual, myth, and symbol to the African experience of vital force, illustrated by the Tonga mhamba, the Lovedu rain festivals, and the Dinka cattle sacrifice. What can be done to make more creative use of ritual, myth, and symbol in African Protestant worship? In the first place, more emphasis should be placed on ritual involving congregational participation. At present, such participation basically consists of hymn singing. More ritual participation could be included if a place were given for more liturgical responses such as antiphonal singing and spoken litanies. Another way of allowing for more ritual participation could be through the appropriate and discreet use of dancing, a method of participation so indigenous to African

culture. Perhaps this could be introduced at time of special celebration like weddings and harvest thanksgiving services. It could also be introduced into the regular worship service during the processional and recessional. It is assumed that such an emphasis on the importance of ritual participation would carry with it an emphasis on the importance of the sacraments. The worship practices of Zionist sects attest to the importance of the sacramental dimension in African religious behavior. Here, not only the traditional sacraments of the Lord's Supper and baptism are important, but also such sacramental acts as footwashing, blessing, and prayers for healing. Indeed, the African church could be true to the Christian and African traditions by structuring worship in such a way as to include a rich use of sacraments and relevant symbolic acts: "By symbolic action we are enabled to live into the images of ourselves which are projected in common life."<sup>4</sup> The missionary thrust in Africa needs to heed this insight if it expects to encourage the Africanization of the church.

A third proposal concerning missionary strategy in Africa is that Western missions should appreciate and allow for

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<sup>4</sup> Charles R. Stinnette, Jr., Learning in Theological Perspective (New York: Association Press, 1965), p. 60.

constructive expressions of ecstasy in the context of the African Christian community. Harry Boer, the missionary-theologian, expresses the same conviction on the basis of his experience in Nigeria: "Perhaps it has been the great fault of us western missionaries that we have not been able to conceive that the ecstatic can be decent and orderly."<sup>5</sup> It has already been indicated why and how the Western church has tended to quench and reject ecstatic religious behavior. Undoubtedly, the force of theological energy in this tradition has gone into efforts explaining why experiences involving ecstasy are not the Holy Spirit, rather than in an attempt to distinguish and encourage the possible creative elements of the Holy Spirit which are given in ecstatic experience. The missionary as a Westerner is part of a tradition that has elevated consciousness at the expense of repressing the creative forces of psychic life.

Since consciousness is, in fact, so small a part of the total psychic life, its struggle to wrest control and determine the meanings by which life is to be lived is always a struggle

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<sup>5</sup> Harry R. Boer, Pentecost and Missions (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), p. 228.

against immense odds. The attainment of rational and ethical existence in Greece and Israel required also a great suppression or repression of psychic forces.<sup>6</sup>

It has been noted that both Tillich and Jung are relevant for their emphasis on the importance of the creative psychic forces indicating that the ecstasy-producing forces working through the unconscious can be constructive, leading to wholeness and integration. As has been indicated, ecstatic expression is a common and vital part of traditional African religious behavior, often being associated with a sense of vitality and power and demonstrated with the use of healings, glossolalia, and various psychic phenomena. In the two preceding chapters we suggested how such expressions of ecstasy could be evaluated and adjudicated in light of the work of the Holy Spirit seen in both historical and contemporary perspective. Here we established the criteria by which such expressions could be determined as either helpful or harmful. The proposal now being made is that some ecstatic religious behavior in its helpful and constructive form should be allowed a place in the African Christian community. Regulated and adjudicated by the African Christian community, such phenomena could include the use

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<sup>6</sup> John B. Cobb, Jr., The Structure of Christian Existence (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), p. 117.

of glossolalia and interpretation, prayers for healings, and insight and communication of a psychical nature. In the African churches which have severed the umbilical tie with Western missions, such phenomena are evident and play a prominent part in worship and witness. To categorically reject all such phenomena as dangerous, useless, and immature is to drive many Africans to seek sect groups in which ecstasy plays a vital part in religious expression.

The fourth and final suggestion to arise from our study is related to the training and function of the ministry in African culture. As has been indicated in our study, Africans tend to view their diviners and witchdoctors as men of special power, men who hold the secrets of life. In one way or another these functionaries have the means to help the African increase his vital force. In the same vein, Zionist prophets gain a following because of some special ability to heal, prophesy, or exorcise. With care to avoid any connotation of magical manipulation, would it not be possible for African pastors to follow something of the same pattern in order to minister to the whole complex of needs of the African people? John Taylor expresses the essence of the proposal in this way:



For until Christians can bring to their own ministers their sickness and their feuds, the sterility of their wives and rebelliousness of their sons, with some expectation of enlightenment and healing, they will continue to look elsewhere for help.<sup>7</sup>

In order to qualify for such a gargantuan task, African pastors need a historical and experiential sense of how God acts in and through the Holy Spirit. Such an emphasis should be basic to all African pastoral training and continued study. In a sense, the task of seeing how the Holy Spirit can be related to African dynamism is a task for every African pastor who seeks to contribute toward the growth of an African church. It is hoped and assumed that such a strong emphasis on pneumatology will at the same time provide a basis for establishing a ministry in which social vision plays a significant role, a ministry that will work to bring order out of chaos through the teaching of literacy, hygiene, and basic agriculture. In all its aspects, the Christian ministry in Africa needs to be structured from a pneumatological perspective. It needs to operate with the assumption and awareness that it is functioning in and through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Life-giver.

In a sense, all four of the preceding proposals related to

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<sup>7</sup>Taylor, op. cit., p. 152.

the Africanization of the ecclesiastical structure, the worship practices, and the ministerial functions have one thing in common: they provide for a matrix in which God can be experienced and worshiped as an immanent power and as a personal presence. It is within such a matrix that a truly African church can grow and become a part of African life. Father Placide Tempels makes a perceptive comment regarding the relation of the Christian faith to African thought: "The ancient wisdom of the Bantu, reaches out from the depth of its Bantu soul towards the very soul of Christian spirituality."<sup>8</sup> It is precisely through emphasis on the Holy Spirit that the Christian faith is apt to become most understandable in and adaptable to pragmatic African culture. For what Africans want and need is not another transcendent sky god, but rather a God who is present as creative power and personal love. As the old Yoruba oracle says: "The sky is immense, but it grows no grass."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Placide Tempels, Bantu Philosophy (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1959), p. 114.

<sup>9</sup>Taylor, op. cit., p. 88.

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